

GEORGIA'S CIVIL WAR NEWSPAPERS:
PATRIAN, SARCOINE, INTERPRETING

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	v
CHAPTERS	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Overview	1
Review of literature	2
Purpose	14
Research questions	15
Methodology	16
Scope and Limitations	17
Battle Names	18
2 ANTI-BELLUM GEORGIA AND ITS PRESS	18
Overview	19
Antebellum Georgia	20
Georgia's Antebellum Newspapers	20
Sectional Differences Within	26
Conclusion	41
3 "WAR IS LAST"	43
Overview	43
Reporting the Secession Convention	44
The War Begins	55
Newspapers Prepare to Cover the War	57
The Battle of First Manassas	58
Observational Election	62
Conclusion	65
4 "THE WAR'S NEVER LOOKED BLISTER"	67
Overview	67
Attacks on the Battlefield	67
The Battle of Shiloh	69
Fighting in Georgia	101
Other Wars	108
Fighting in Virginia	113
The Battle of Sharpsburg	124

The Battle of Fryingpanburg	130
Conclusion	136
5 "OUR SITUATION IS NOT NEARLY SO GOOD"	137
Overview	137
Spring Campaign	138
Other News	141
Parrest Proclaimed a Hero	145
Vicksburg Surrenders	154
The Battle of Gettysburg	158
Fighting Elsewhere	168
Soldier Correspondence	173
The Battle of Chancellorsville	175
The Battle of Chattanooga	184
Conclusion	190
6 "SOUTHERN PROGRESSIVE WAR DELIBERATELY"	194
Overview	194
Condition of Georgia's Newspapers	195
Local and National News	199
Salmon Corpsus Controversy	200
Fighting in Georgia	205
Atlanta's Newspapers Flex	215
"Maver" Reports the Fall of Atlanta	228
Fighting in Virginia	233
Brown, Stephens, and Augusta's Policies	237
The March to the Sea	244
The Capture of Savannah	250
Conclusion	260
7 "IT IS POLICY TO TALK ABOUT FURTHER RESISTANCE" ...	265
Overview	265
A Season of Despondency	268
Savannah's "Index" Newspapers Founder	280
The End of the War	276
Newspapers Struggle to Publish	278
The Beginning of Reconciliation	280
Conclusion	283
8 CONCLUSIONS	284
Overview	284
Conditions of Publishing	285
Reporting the War	289
Conclusions	297
REFERENCES	311
GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES	320

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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GEORGIA'S CIVIL WAR NEWSPAPERS:
PARTISAN, SENSITIVE, ENTREPRENEUR

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This dissertation is an historical study of Georgia's newspapers during the American Civil War. Particular attention is paid to three questions: (1) What were the conditions under which Georgia newspapers were published and what effect did the war have on the press? (2) What were the reporting strengths and weaknesses of the state's newspapers? (3) What role did the state's press play in preserving or hurting public morale? The high cost of materials, shortages of employees, and impact of the fighting greatly affected news and editorial content. After less than a year of fighting, most editors had reduced the size of their papers and by the end of the war less than half of the state's papers were still publishing. The historic roots of Georgia's press assert that reporting of

The war often was partisan, misleading, and incomplete. At the same time, editors clearly viewed one of their tasks to be helping the South win the war, and in this respect their editorials vigorously minimizing Confederate defeats, vilifying the North, and denigrating the superiority of the Southern way of life were successful. Yet in not being entirely honest with their readers, editors likely made the Confederacy's defeat more difficult to accept. Yet while the war amplified the shortcomings of Georgia's journalism, it also had a positive impact on the press and created more interest in newspapers than at any time in the state's history. The best reporters and editors recognized that readers wanted more than mere partisanship and propaganda and in numerous instances the stories produced were of excellent quality. In reporting the news of residents fighting in faraway places and the impact of the war on their communities, editors also showed a growing recognition of the importance of local and human interest news to readers. Never again would they take a backseat to news from elsewhere. Very likely, it was this recognition of the critical role the press played in local communities that kept many enterprising editors publishing far longer than they should have been expected to.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Savannah

The date was April 12, 1861. Word had reached Savannah, Georgia, early in the morning that one hundred miles away, Confederate cannons had opened fire on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. James B. Speed of the Savannah Republican and William F. Thompson of the Savannah Morning News hurriedly packed their bags and boarded the one o'clock train for Charleston. On the train the two editors were joined by citizens of Savannah who also had heard the news from Charleston and wanted to see the fighting for themselves. At one stop, where troops from South Carolina boarded the train, Speed and Thompson could hear the sound of cannon fire from the north. On a steam ferry that took them across the river to Charleston, the men could smell the sulfurous fumes of gunpowder. After arriving in Charleston and checking in at a hotel, Speed and Thompson ate a quick supper and rushed to the city's battery. There while a light rain fell, the editors and an immense crowd of men, women, and children witnessed the start of the American Civil War.¹

¹"Fort Sumter Taken!" Savannah Morning News, 12 April 1861, 1.

Wood and Thompson knew their readers would want the latest news from Fort Sumter. So did the editors of other Georgia newspapers. Reporters from at least two other papers, the Columbus Gas and the Wacona Daily Telegraph, also were in Charleston to report on the fighting. During the first half of the century, newspapers had become the most popular form of literature read by Americans, in both the North and South. And during the decade prior to the Civil War, the number of newspapers in the South had more than doubled. In the absence of other media, most Southerners, Georgians included, learned of virtually all the news outside their communities from newspapers. As Southern historian Avery O. Craven has written, the newspaper editor "more than any other person spoke to and for the people of the section. Only the clergymen rivaled him in influence."²

Although ill-prepared for a war of such magnitude, Georgia's editors did their utmost to cover the war as best they knew how. The larger dailies sent correspondents into the field and supplemented their reports with letters from soldier correspondents. The smaller weeklies depended on soldier correspondents and news clipped from the major dailies. Both dailies and weeklies depended on two journalistic developments still in their infancy.

²Avery O. Craven, The Growth of Southern Nationalism, 1848-1862 (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1955), 178. See also, Donald E. Rayburn, William Wade Wain, Southern Newspapers in the Reconstruction Era (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1964), 5.

telegraphic news and cooperative news gathering services. Like these elsewhere, Georgia's newspaper correspondents had little journalistic experience and no experience reporting a war. Despite these handicaps, several correspondents turned out excellent work and at least one, Peter W. Alexander of the American Republican, gained a reputation that extended beyond the boundaries of the state.³

In reporting news of the war, reporters and editors had to deal with Confederate censors as well as their own concerns about preserving public morals. Although the Confederate constitution provided for freedom of the press, Congress passed several bills aimed at censoring news. Some scholars have argued that officials did not need to silence the press because newspapers generally cooperated with the government to keep damaging information from being published. The government and newspapers were unified in wanting to advance the cause of the Confederacy.⁴ Early in the war, the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel said, "we want to give the enemy no information of the number of men we have in service, nor of their position or destination, when our

³J. Cutler Anderson, The South Reports The Civil War (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), 32.

⁴J. Cutler Anderson, "The Confederate Press and Public Morale," Journal of Southern History 12 (November 1946): 443-468; and James M. Silver, "Propaganda in the Confederacy," Journal of Southern History 11 (November 1945): 487-503.

Government thinks such information might benefit the enemy or prejudice our cause."³

Like their brethren in the Confederate press, Georgia editors sought to preserve public morale through various means, including the use of propaganda. Exaggerated reports of Union losses appeared regularly in print, the result of sloppy reporting or wishful thinking on the part of a reporter or editor. Georgia newspapers usually tried to put the best face on Confederate losses or resorted to euphemisms, as when they described a retreat as a "retrograde movement." Most newspapers also published atrocity stories. These took various forms, but most often they sought to portray Union soldiers as cold-blooded barbarians intent on plundering the South.⁴

The spirit of cooperation did not save Georgia's press redreined from criticizing state and Confederate officials. Editors were bitterly divided over the policies of Vice President Alexander H. Stephens and Governor Joseph E. Brown, staunch foes of President Jefferson Davis. Many of the state's journals also voiced serious concerns over the way Davis and his administration prosecuted the war. Among

³*Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel*, 7 June 1861, 2.

⁴J. O'Neil Andrews, *The South Begins the Civil War*, 187; Allen Fessell, "The Atlanta Daily Intelligence Corvica Norcross's March," *Journalism Quarterly*, 51 (1974): 437-418.

the most hotly debated subjects were the Conscription Act and attempts to suspend the writ of *habeas corpus*.⁷

As the war dragged on, newspapers had to deal with scarcity of materials, obsolete equipment, and shortages of printers and other help. Paper that had cost three to five dollars a year before the war had risen to fifty or sixty dollars a year in mid-1864. The cost of ink, glue, oil and other essentials of printing rose as well. Paper shortages were a continual problem for the press. Most newspapers steadily decreased in size over the course of the war. Publishing also was hampered by the loss of editors and printers who joined the army. By June of 1861, the Augusta Constitutionalist noted that seventeen employees of the city's newspapers had enlisted in the Confederate army.⁸ Later in the war, after missing one issue, the Macon Daily Telegraph and Confederate explained, "there was no newspaper issued from the Confederate office on Sunday morning. Every man in the establishment was in the field on Saturday. We hope our subscribers will consider this a sufficient excuse."⁹

⁷Louis Warren Griffith and John Ervin Tolson, Georgia Journalists, 1863-1865 (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1961), 78-88.

⁸"Military Printers," Augusta Daily Constitutionalist, 28 June 1861, 1.

⁹Savannah Republican, 27 September 1864, 1.

The difficulty in securing materials, the loss of employees, and other economic hardship forced some editors to sell or merge their papers. Many others papers ceased publishing entirely. General William T. Sherman's Atlanta Campaign and subsequent "March to the Sea" also had a devastating effect on the state's press. When Union troops captured Atlanta, Columbus, Macon, Rome, Milledgeville, and other towns in 1864, editors either shut down their publications or moved them to other locations. The Atlanta Daily Intelligencer moved to Macon and later published from a train boxcar for a short period of time. The Milledgeville Confederate Times escaped from the Union army when its press and equipment were hurriedly taken to the woods. Other newspaper offices, including those of the Rome Courier, the Columbus Sun, and the Columbus Times, were wrecked by Union soldiers. And when Federal troops captured Savannah, they put their own editors in charge of the papers.³⁰

Following the South's surrender, most editors urged readers to accept defeat peacefully and gracefully. "We have but one word of advice to give our fellow citizens of the late Confederate States," the editor of the Milledgeville Southern Recorder wrote. "That is, to submit to our fate as brave men with that dignity of character

³⁰T. Cress Brown, Confederate Georgia (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1953), 187.

that bespeaks a brave, bold, unconquered, but an overpowered people." But others remained defiant. The Albany Patriot concluded its account of General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox with this declaration: "we are yet unconquered, and until the sword of the enemy is at our throats, we upbraid our fellow citizens for their recent feeble conduct. God help our country!"¹¹

The state's newspapers still publishing when peace was finally achieved in 1865 bore deep scars from four years of devastating fighting. But they were ready to be a voice for yet another difficult period in Georgia's history, the Reconstruction Era.

Review of Literature

Only a few books and scholarly articles specifically address Georgia newspapers during the Civil War. Several other studies address newspapers of the South in general during this period. This section explores the work of scholars in the field and points out where the present study fits within the literature.

Robert Lee Bentley examined the state's newspapers and periodicals in his book, Georgia Journalism of the Civil War Period.¹² This brief study, based on the author's doctoral dissertation, is more descriptive than analytical and skims over several important subjects, including the reporting of

¹¹Albany Patriot, 27 April 1865, 2.

¹²Robert Lee Bentley, Georgia Journalism of the Civil War Period (Oakville, Tenn.: George Peabody College, 1979).

the war and censorship concerns of the state's press. Other issues, such as newspaper criticisms of the state and Confederate governments, are not addressed at all. In one chapter, Brantley discussed propaganda concerns and noted that Georgia newspapers remained optimistic throughout the war, serving as agents in sustaining the morale of the state's citizenry. The book is most valuable for its extensive listing and descriptions of newspapers and magazines published in Georgia between 1860 and 1865.

In two chapters of Georgia Journalism: 1860-1865,¹³ Louis Griffith and John Talmadge addressed the same period as the present study. As with the Brantley book, this 1961 study is more descriptive than analytical. Concentrating on the state's larger dailies, Griffith and Talmadge discussed in more detail the content, circulation, and business practices of the antebellum press. The authors criticized newspapers for getting involved in the controversies between Governor Brown and President Davis, arguing that such participation hurt Georgia's war effort.

T. Ows Bryce devoted a chapter, "The Press and Literary Friends" in his book, Confederate Georgia.¹⁴ The chapter described the leading newspapers in the state, including their editors and circulation figures. But it did not have any significant analysis of the issues facing

¹³Griffith and Talmadge, Georgia Journalism.

¹⁴Bryce, Confederate Georgia.

Georgia's press. Bryan emphasized the hardships endured during the war and contended that the quality of the papers was hampered by the censorship imposed by Confederate authorities. Like others he noted that the press sought to preserve morale and remained almost universally optimistic about the Confederacy's chances of winning the war.

E. M. Coulter explored the Confederate press in a chapter of his book, The Confederate States of America, 1861-1865.³⁵ Coulter did not address the Georgia press specifically, but he described the efforts of Vice President Stephens to buy a Georgia newspaper in an effort to discredit the administration of President Davis. Stephens and another man eventually purchased the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel and it became one of the bloughest critics of Davis.

J. Carter Andrews explored the performance of the Southern press in reporting the war. In The South Reports the Civil War.³⁶ Andrews found that the Confederate press did its best to provide full news coverage of the war's military and political events. However, newspapers did so within a framework understood by most editors. Therefore the press could criticize political and military leaders but not the South's "peculiar institution."

³⁵Coulter, The Confederate States of America.

³⁶Andrews, The South Reports the Civil War.

In Reporting the War.¹⁷ Joseph J. Matthews found that Confederate leaders often did not have to censor newspapers because the press generally cooperated with the government to keep damaging information from being published. In a chapter devoted to the Civil War, Matthews argued that the Southern press had a responsibility to pay careful attention to what was being printed because Confederate newspapers often appeared behind Union lines. But beyond that, the government and newspapers shared a unity of purpose in wanting to advance the cause of the Confederacy.

In an article, "The Confederate Press and Public Morale,"¹⁸ Andrews specifically addressed the performance of the Confederate press in fostering and sustaining public morale. He concluded that despite complaints that newspapers were given to fault finding, most Southern editors eagerly promoted war spirit. In attempting to foster public morale, the Confederate press had to contend with military defeat, financial stringency, private suffering and continual conflict between the central authority and state governments.

James W. Silver described Confederate attempts to heighten public morale in an article, "Propaganda in the

¹⁷Joseph J. Matthews, Reporting the War (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1957).

¹⁸Andrews, "The Confederate Press and Public Morale."

Confederacy."¹⁹ Southern propaganda took various forms and involved different groups, including the press. Southern newspapers regularly exaggerated Union losses and minimized Confederate defeats. They also made use of atrocity stories. And up to the end of the war, many Southern papers remained confident of Confederate victory, according to Silver.

An example of one Georgia newspaper's efforts to maintain public morale was described by Alan Russell in "The Atlanta Daily Intelligencer Covers Sherman's March."²⁰ Russell discussed how the Daily Intelligencer continued to see success by Confederate troops even as the Northern army, commanded by William T. Sherman, closed in on Atlanta. This "disappointment and unshared hopelessness," Russell concluded, must be understood in the context of public opinion in which the newspaper operated. The Daily Intelligencer was giving its readers a southern viewpoint of the war.

Henry T. Malone briefly examined the newspapers of Atlanta in an article, "Atlanta Journalism During the Confederacy."²¹ Malone described the six newspapers

¹⁹Silver, "Propaganda in the Confederacy."

²⁰Russell, "The Atlanta Daily Intelligencer Covers Sherman's March."

²¹Henry T. Malone, "Atlanta Journalism During the Confederacy," Georgia Historical Society, 77 (September 1953): 210-229.

published in the city at various times during the war, as well as the peripatetic journals that found a temporary home in Atlanta. Of the papers, only the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer and the Atlanta Southern Confederacy survived the duration of the war. Malone contended that the city's journals suffered from continual personnel problems because of the Confederate draft.

In another article, "The Atlanta Intelligencer as a secessionist Journal,"²¹ Malone examined one newspaper in more depth. Throughout the war, the Intelligencer expressed the need for unified Southern action and argued that Georgia should be a leader in the Confederate movement. Malone contended that the paper's commitment to publishing, despite numerous hardships, made it a leading voice in Atlanta during the war.

Another leading newspaper of the period, the Augusta Chronicle, is discussed by Earl L. Bell and Kenneth C. Crabbe in their book, The Augusta Chronicle: Indomitable Voice of Dixie, 1780-1960.²² The section on the war years is almost entirely descriptive and lacks any substantial analysis. The authors do condemn the action of M.E. Moore, the "Pamlico Editor," as he is called, for his bitter

²¹Henry T. Malone, "The Weekly Atlanta Intelligencer as a secessionist Journal," Georgia Historical Quarterly, 37 (December 1953): 278-284.

²²Earl L. Bell and Kenneth C. Crabbe, The Augusta Chronicle: Indomitable Voice of Dixie, 1780-1960 (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1960).

criticism of the Davis administration and his repeated calls for peace.

William Herbert Wilson examined the editorial opinions expressed by the South Telegraph and Confederate in his thesis, As the Telegraph Saw It: A Study of the Editorial Policy of the South Daily Telegraph (And Confederate), 1862-1865.²⁴ In his thesis, Wilson argues that the newspaper's two editors supported the Confederate cause, but were not afraid to criticize ineptitude or mismanagement on the part of military and government officials when they believed it was warranted.

In summary, the Brantley book, chapters by Bryan and Griffin, and Bell and Grimes, three journal articles, and the thesis are the only ones to address Georgia newspapers exclusively. These studies, as well as those addressing the Confederate press as a whole, have concentrated almost exclusively on daily newspapers, particularly those in the larger cities. The weekly press in Georgia and the Confederacy has been largely ignored in studies of the period. Most of the studies have emphasized the hardships, especially the impact of shortages and invasion, that newspapers in Georgia and the Confederacy suffered under. Also ignored, with the exception of the Andrews and Matthews books, is how Confederate papers reported the war. Several

²⁴William Herbert Wilson, As the Telegraph Saw It: A Study of the Editorial Policy of the South Daily Telegraph (And Confederate), 1862-1865. (M.A. thesis, Emory University, 1988).

studies have explored the propaganda efforts of the press and its tendency to be overly optimistic. Authors have found that while the press often was critical of political and military leaders, it never questioned the ultimate aim of the Confederate states. The government and newspapers shared a unity of purpose in wanting to advance the cause of the Confederacy.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to examine the context of Georgia's newspapers during the Civil War period. A study of the newspapers is significant because Georgia had an active press during the war and was second only to Virginia among Confederate states in the number of newspapers published. Newspapers were the most popular form of reading material available to Georgians; most residents learned of everything taking place outside their community from their paper. Yet, as discussed in the literature review, only one brief study has been attempted on Georgia's Civil War press.

The present study also is significant for its value beyond the confines of Georgia. Historians have long emphasized the important place of the Civil War in the development of America's press. As journalism historian Frank Luther Mott has written,

Probably no great war has ever been so thoroughly covered as the American civil War. . . . [C]onditions allowed for more unobscured, on-the-scene reporting than did those of later wars. And though values were less, the proportion of newspaper space given to

military news was quite as great as in subsequent years.²⁰

Certainly, one has to be careful about using a study of one state's newspapers to generalize about the country's press as a whole. But an examination of Georgia's newspapers can provide insight into many issues facing the Confederate press: reporting the war, the use of censorship and propaganda, and the effects of invasion and shortages.

Research Questions

The primary question addressed by this study is: What was the news and editorial content of Georgia's newspapers during the Civil War period? To answer this question, the following subordinate questions were investigated.

1. What were the conditions under which newspapers were published and what effect did the war have on the press?
2. What were the strengths and weaknesses of war reporting by Georgia's newspapers?
3. What role did the state's press play in preserving or hurting public morale during the war?

²⁰Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism, A History, 1670-1920* (New York: MacMillan, 1943), 126. See also Michael Toney and Edwin Toney, *The Press and American An Informative History of the Mass Media* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1964), 131-34; Jean Folkerts and Dwight L. Tuten, Jr., *Voices of a Nation: A History of Mass Media in the United States* (New York: MacMillan, 1964), 175-227; and Wm. David Blair and James D. Stuart, eds., *The Media in American History* (Nashport, Ala.: Vision Press, 1976), 187-214.

Methodology

This study employed historical techniques to examine Georgia's newspapers during the Civil War period. Extant newspapers--either originals or microfilm copies--were studied to determine news and editorial content. Other materials, including primary and secondary sources, were used to provide additional insights and put the newspapers in historical context. These sources included diaries, letters, census records, journal articles, and books.

The main sources for this study were the newspapers published in Georgia during the Civil War years. Seventy-five daily, bi-weekly, tri-weekly, and weekly newspapers were published in Georgia in 1860. Copies of many of the papers published during the war no longer exist, however, having been lost or destroyed. A check of several sources, including the listings in Newspapers in Microform,¹⁴ showed that about thirty Georgia newspapers from the war years are available today. The extent of the holdings varies from paper to paper. In a few cases, the runs are virtually complete. In many others, there are gaps in the record, some quite large.

No collection of diaries or letters written by Georgia reporters or editors has been identified. A few editors had limited correspondence with President Davis, Vice President

¹⁴ Newspapers in Microform. (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1973).

Stephens, and other government officials. These letters were examined.

This study does not include the peripatetic newspapers published in Georgia during the latter part of the war. Three Tennessee newspapers, the *Chattanooga Rebel*, *Memphis Appeal*, and *Knoxville Register*, were published in various Georgia communities after the Union army captured their hometowns.³⁷ The study also does not include the magazines published in Georgia during the war years. Magazines of the period generally were of three types: literary, religious, or trade journals. In each they were directed at a certain audience and not to the general readership.³⁸

Scope and Limitations

This study examined Georgia newspapers between January 1861 and June 1865. The period was chosen because it includes the four years of the war as well as the three months preceding the beginning of fighting and the three months following the conclusion of fighting. Although Chapter Two will include a brief discussion of the state's antebellum press, this serves only to set the stage for the

³⁷The *Memphis Appeal*, which published in some ten cities including three in Georgia before known as the "Moving Appeal." Thomas A. Baker, "Refugee Newspapers: The Memphis Daily Appeal, 1862-1865," *Journal of Southern History* 37 (February 1971): 329-344.

³⁸For a discussion of Civil War magazines, including those published in the Confederacy, see Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, Volume II, 1865-1880* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957).

rest of the study. Newspapers of that period are cited, but no thorough examination is attempted.

January 1861 has been selected as the starting date because that is the month when delegates from Georgia voted to secede from the Union. The study includes approximately three months after the end of the war to assess how the press had weakened four years of fighting. June 1865 admittedly is a somewhat arbitrary date to conclude, but to continue any farther would mean getting into the Reconstruction era. That should be the subject of a separate study.

Battle Names

In several instances, the North and South gave different names to Civil War battles. In most cases, the Confederates named their battle after the town that served as their base, while the Federals given the landmark nearest to the fighting, usually a river or stream. Because this dissertation examines the newspapers of a Confederate state, the Southern name is used when referring to a battle. Thus the war's first major battle is called "Manassas," instead of the Union name, "Bull Run." Likewise, "Second Manassas" is used instead of "Second Bull Run." The pivotal battle fought in Maryland in September 1862 is referred to as "Sharpsburg," instead of the Union name, "Antietam."

CHAPTER 2 ANTEBELLUM GEORGIA AND ITS PRESS

Overview

As the year 1861 began, Georgia and its newspapers were prospering. Earlier in the century, Georgia had earned the nickname "Empire State of the South" and the title seemed appropriate. A thriving agricultural economy, buttressed by growing industrialization, meant a healthy economy. Since the turn of the century, the state's population had been growing steadily to the point where Georgia was the second most populous state in the Lower South with more than one million residents. Georgia's newspapers benefited from the growth. The number of papers published in the state doubled during the decade of the 1850s to approximately seventy-five. All of the larger towns and many smaller ones could boast of having at least two papers. In fact, next to Virginia, more daily and weekly papers were published in Georgia than any other state in the South. Despite the prosperity, by the end of 1860 Georgia was on the verge of leaving the Union and plunging into a tragic civil war. This chapter briefly explores some of the economic, social, and political developments in antebellum Georgia that led the state to take this fateful step. Further, it examines

the development of the state's press during this period and the role of newspapers on the eve of the war.

Agricultural Georgia

Since its establishment as a state in 1788, agriculture had been the mainstay of Georgia's economy. And from the beginning, the use of African slaves was vital to the state's agricultural success. Initially rice, which was most successfully grown and harvested in a plantation system utilizing large numbers of slaves, was the state's chief money crop. Although far more of the state's farms were of subsistence or subsistence size, the great rice plantations were creating a wealthy and landed aristocracy by the time of American Revolution.¹

The growing of rice was limited to Georgia's coastal freshwater swamps. As settlement of the state moved west during the early national period, cotton replaced rice as the money crop. Development of an upland, short-staple variety of cotton meant that the lucrative crop could be grown throughout much of the state. With Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin near Savannah in 1793, a revolution in the state's agriculture and life was underway. Cotton also had the advantage of being grown both on large plantations with slave labor or on smaller farms. During the first half of the nineteenth century seemingly nothing could stop the expansion of cotton production in the state as it

¹Bernethi Coleman, ed. *A History of Georgia* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1971), 48-49.

scored from 10,000 bales in 1821 to 508,800 bales in 1860. That made Georgia second only to Alabama in total cotton production in the United States.¹

Alongside Georgia's other main crop was corn. More than thirty million bushels of corn were grown in 1860 with some forty percent of the state's cultivated land planted with the crop. Much of Georgia's other agricultural products were regional. Rice continued to be grown in large quantities on the coast. The pine barrens and wiregrass regions in the southeast part of the state supported free-roaming herds of cattle, sheep, and hogs. In the mountainous northern section of the state, residents grew apples but mainly practiced subsistence farming. The agricultural heartland of the state was the central and southwestern region. Not only were cotton and corn grown in the fertile area, but also large harvests of tobacco, wheat, oats, and sweet potatoes.²

The central and southwestern region supported the bulk of Georgia's population which had grown to 1,857,286 by 1860, 483,108 of whom were black slaves.³ Although relatively few white residents of Georgia lived on plantations during the antebellum period, most blacks did.

¹Colman, *A History of Georgia*, 143.

²Colman, *A History of Georgia*, 143-144.

³*Statistical View of the United States in 1860*. Eighth Census, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 71.

used in a wide variety of agricultural occupation, slaves were of tremendous economic value. They worked not only as field hands and house servants, but in many skilled and unskilled occupations, among them blacksmiths, carpenters, weavers, and cooks. During slack periods of agricultural production, many slaves could be lucratively hired out. The value of slaves is evidenced by the increasing price for which they could be sold. That price rose from six hundred dollars in 1810 to eighteen hundred dollars in 1860. As one historian of the state has noted, that meant that Negro property in the state was worth more than all the state's land and commodities combined.⁵

Slaves lacked all civil and political rights as set forth in the state's Slave Code of 1833. They could not learn to read or write; they could not travel without a pass; they could not own property; and they could not testify against whites in court. A slave could be freed only by a special act of the state legislature. Masters governed slaves as they saw fit. Although some treated their slaves kindly, many others abused their "niggers" with whippings and other inhuman punishment. Most slaves lived in ramshackle cabins with dirt floors. Their food, although

⁵E. Merton Coulter, A Short History of Georgia (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), 288.

plaintful, generally was plain. Their clothing often was shabby and coarse.⁴

Like other Southerners, Georgians believed it was their constitutional right to deal with slavery within the state's boundaries as they saw fit. The state passed a law in 1834 declaring that anyone inciting slaves to insurrection would be put to death, and that anyone who, by speech or writing, should incite slaves to "sedition, tumult or disorder" should be banished from the state. In 1837, a Georgia Senate committee declared that it could not

avoid reproaching the cold-blooded selfishness, or unthinking zeal which advocates many of our fellow citizens in other states, to an interference with our loved Georgia and domestic relations, totally unwarranted whether by humanity or constitutional right The result of such ignorance, if persevered in, is awful and inevitable.

During this same period, the influence of the planter class on the state's social and political life grew. For many in the state, the plantation gentry became the model for social aspiration. Both urban and rural residents viewed being a plantation owner as the one sure road to social respectability. Small farmers and poor whites also identified with the plantation system largely because of the use of slaves. As Wilbur F. Cook later wrote,

If the plantation had introduced distinctions of rank and wealth among men of the old backcountry, and, in so

⁴Cutler, *History of Georgia*, 133-134. See also, Ralph Metts Plaster, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1933).

⁵Cutler, *A Short History of Georgia*, 284.

doing, had perhaps offended against the ego of the common white. It had also . . . introduced that other vastly age-warping distinction between the white man and the black.

From the planter class came many of the men who became Georgia's political leaders during the Antebellum period, among them Howell Cobb, Alexander S. Stephens, and Robert Toombs. These men loved their state and also developed a growing consciousness of themselves as southerners. "The south is my home--my fatherland," Stephens wrote. "There sleep the ashes of my sires and grandfathers; there are my hopes and prospecting with her my fortunes are cast; her fate is my fate and my destiny her destiny."⁸

Georgia also became increasingly industrialized during the first half of the nineteenth century. Local cotton gins and mills began appearing during the 1820s, gradually growing larger and more sophisticated. By 1840, Georgia's textile industry employed 2,403 people, the most of any Southern state. Other industries, including quarries, lumber mills, and small mines, also prospered largely in the state's rural areas. A variety of goods were produced in the state's cities including shoes and leather goods, furniture, weapons, carriages, bricks, and machinery. Slave labor was used in many of these industries.⁹

⁸William J. Cash, The Mind of the South (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941), 38.

⁹As quoted in J. C. Kendall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction (Boston: H.C. Heath, 1941), 44.

¹⁰Cobbess, A History of Georgia, 170-171.

Growth and industrialization were aided by the state's expanding railroad system. By 1860 Georgia had built an extensive railroad line, the longest in the lower South and second only to Virginia in the entire South. More than fourteen hundred miles of track criss-crossed the state, mainly in central Georgia but extending into the northern and southern sections as well.¹¹

By 1861 Georgia still was largely rural by Southern standards. However, steady economic growth had helped to create five medium-sized cities and more than a dozen prosperous towns. Savannah, with its thriving seaport, was the state's chief exporting center; Augusta, Columbus, and Macon had become cotton centers because of their location in the agricultural belt and strong transportation facilities. And Atlanta had begun to emerge as the state's chief railroad center. The list of smaller towns was headed by Milledgeville, the state's capital, as well as Athens, Marietta, Rome, Griffin, LaGrange, Americus, Sandersville, and Albany. These, and other communities in the state, supported a lively and active press.

Georgia's Antebellum Newspapers

On the eve of the war, newspapers were the most popular reading material available to Georgians--or for that matter all Americans. The director of the Census of 1860 wrote that newspapers and periodicals "furnish nearly the whole of

¹¹Coleman, A History of Georgia, 187-188.

the reading which the greater number, whether from inclination or necessity, permit themselves to enjoy."¹¹ Both Americans learned at almost everything taking place outside their own communities from newspapers. This gave editors tremendous influence and responsibility, a fact recognized by observers of the period. Statesman and political philosopher Edward Everett said in 1840, "The newspaper press of the U.S. is, for good or evil, the most powerful influence that acts on the public mind--the most powerful in itself and as the channel through which most other influence acts."¹² Historians have recognized the role of newspapers during this period. Henry Crown, writing in The Speech of Southern Nationalism, 1848-1861, described the press as "both an expression and a molders of public opinion."¹³ In his book, Editors Make War, Donald E. Reynolds has written that "the way in which news was selected and interpreted carried a tremendous influence on molding the viewpoints of Southerners on many subjects."¹⁴

¹¹Joseph C. G. Kennedy, Preliminary Report on the Eighth Decade, 1848 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 100-101.

¹²As quoted in Lashert Wilson, Our Press Game (Philadelphia: J. W. Lloyd, 1940), 41.

¹³Henry C. Crown, The Speech of Southern Nationalism, 1848-1861 (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1953), 439.

¹⁴Donald E. Reynolds, Editors Make War, Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis (Columbia, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1970), vii.

Before the war Georgia's newspapers shared many of the same characteristics as the rest of the Southern press. The number of newspapers in the region had grown steadily between 1810 and 1860 thanks to a rapidly growing population and declining illiteracy rates. The growth was greatest in the decade prior to the war. Between 1850 and 1860 the number of newspapers and magazines in the eleven future Confederate states grew from 523 to 847. During the same period, the number of newspapers and periodicals in Georgia jumped from 51 to 105. Between 1850 and 1860, circulation in the state rose from 84,188 to 180,872.¹⁴

Circulation figures for individual Georgia newspapers are not available, but no publication in the state sold more than 10,000 copies on a daily basis. The publisher of the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel bragged during the war that he was selling 8,888 copies, more than any other newspaper in the state. No other paper disputed that figure. Most editors sold far fewer copies. In fact, most of the state's papers had circulations in the hundreds rather than the thousands. Still, all of the state's large communities and many of the smaller ones had at least two publications. For the most part, newspapers were scattered evenly throughout the state except for the sparsely populated northeastern region where only Brunswick and Savannah had journals.

¹⁴ A Compendium of the Ninth Census (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1875), 816. Note that these figures include both newspapers and magazines published in the state. Magazines are not included in this study.

But while the number of newspapers in Georgia and the rest of the South was growing rapidly, they did not proliferate at the same rate. Antebellum newspapers, even those in the larger cities, remained staunchly partisan and on the eve of the war continued to emphasize editorial content more than news. Few papers in the South, and only one in Georgia, tried to follow the "penny press" model developed by some of the New York dailies and copied elsewhere in the North.¹⁷ The first issue of the Savannah Morning News in January 1850 declared that the city needed a cheap, popular newspaper that would be neutral in politics. The Morning News, however, was only partly successful in achieving these goals. Although the paper's annual subscription rate was less than Savannah's other dailies, the price for single copies never reached the "penny" level. And while the Morning News initially sought to stay out of the political arena, it soon became vigorously partisan.¹⁸

The state's newspapers generally fell into one of two classes: dailies or weeklies. The term "daily" actually was something of a misnomer because prior to the war no newspaper in Georgia published seven days a week. Publishers gave their staffs at least one day off and thus did not publish a paper either on Sunday or Monday. The publishing

¹⁷Joan Folger and Dwight L. Foster, Jr., Evolution of a Nation: A History of Mass Media in the United States (New York: Macmillan, 145-176.

¹⁸Griffin and Talbot, Georgia Journalism, 37-43.

date of the state's weeklies varied, but most appeared on Wednesday or Thursday. Many dailies also published weekly editions for their readers in the country. The content of these weeklies was taken almost entirely from recent daily editions of the paper. The first Sunday paper in Georgia was published by the *Augusta Constitutionalist* in 1888, followed by the *Chamblee Sentinel* in 1899. But since both publishers discontinued the Sunday issues, it was little more than a change in publication date.¹⁸

The typical daily or weekly edition during the period was four pages in length. Page one contained timeless features, including fiction and poetry, along with a large portion of advertising. Pages two and three were devoted to news, editorials, letters, and commercial reports. Both pages also contained advertising, much of it usually legal advertising. Page four was devoted almost entirely to advertising. By present day standards, the format of Georgia's newspapers was dull and monotonous. Virtually no illustrations appeared, except for woodcuts accompanying advertisements. Most papers used an eight-column format, although some used six columns and a few, four. The banner headline stretching across an entire page had been introduced in the 1890s, but most newspapers stuck with the old one-column headlines. Even multiple deck headlines were used infrequently, usually only to report major news. The

¹⁸Griffin and Tolson, *Georgia Journalism*, 81.

same story might appear in daily newspapers for several days depending on the amount of news an editor had. Advertisements often ran for weeks or even months with no changes except their position on a page.

Georgia's newspapers benefited from the developments in printing and papermaking that had taken place during the 1830s. Improvements in the Fourdrinier papermaking machines used in water mills had reduced the price of rag paper used for printing. Prior to the war, four paper mills operated in Georgia.³⁰ By 1860 most of the state's dailies were using the Hot rotary press, invented at the beginning of the century. Usually powered by steam, these "lightning" presses could print more than one thousand copies per hour. Meanwhile, in the smaller communities, weekly publishers continued to use the old, but reliable, Westington hand process.³¹

³⁰Statistical View of the United States in 1860, Eighth Census, Volume 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 600-601. Additionally, the Bath Paper Mill, the largest paper mill in the South, was located in South Carolina just across the state line from Augusta.

³¹Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1943), 104-105. The Augusta Constitutionalist built a new printing plant in 1858 at a cost of 15,000 dollars. Although certainly not typical of all the state's newspapers, it provides an idea of the facilities of a more prosperous publication. On the first floor of the building were the presses, job room, and counting room. The press room was thirty-five feet high with windows and a skylight. A steam engine ran a Hot cylinder press and a small job press. The second floor contained the composing room and offices, including those of the editor and associate editor. Griggs and Tinsley, *Georgia Journalism* 22-23.

No matter what type of press used, on the eve of the war all of the state's weeklies and dailies continued the practice of printing pages one and four earlier in the week and printing pages two and three just before the paper was to be distributed. Although this was necessary because of limited printing capacity and manpower, it meant that even the biggest news events usually appeared on page two.

The staffs of the state's newspapers varied according to the size of the publication. Most country weeklies were staffed by an editor and one or two assistants responsible for page makeup and printing. The editor of a weekly had to be a true "jack-of-all-trades" because he had to write the paper's news stories and editorials, sell advertising, keep the financial records, and help with printing and circulation.²⁰ Daily editors also were busy, although they had more help. As best as can be determined, none of the state's dailies had reporting staffs, as was becoming increasingly popularized by the "Penny" papers in the North.²¹ But some daily editors employed one or two assistant editors who helped with news gathering and editorial writing. Although most editors directed their paper's advertising, printing and record keeping, they had staff members who handled the day-to-day work. Keeping full

²⁰As best as can be determined, there were no female editors in the state prior to or during the war.

²¹Wort, *American Journalism* 311-313.

staffs, especially mechanical help, was a continual problem, however. Many papers regularly published help-wanted advertisements for printers and printer's apprentices.¹⁸

It is impossible to determine whether newspapers of the period were profitable. Certainly, the proportion of advertising to news was high. And many papers liked to brag that their circulations were increasing. Still, most editors regularly used their news columns to complain about delinquent subscribers and advertisers. Some used collection agents, but this practice apparently was not productive.¹⁹

On the eve of the war, all the state's newspapers carried a far larger percentage of state, national and international news as compared to local news. The sources for news outside a paper's community varied. During the 1850s, most of Georgia's dailies began receiving telegraphic news from the Associated Press which served its Southern clients from Louisville, Kentucky. Even so, the state's dailies and weeklies continued to rely heavily on exchanges to fill their news holes. Georgia editors exchanged their papers with their counterparts in both the South and North,

¹⁸Griffin and Townsend, *Georgia Journalism*, 44-45.

¹⁹One collector's representative reported that he had made 117 calls but received only three dollars and twelve cents. In seeking to get even, he had been forced to "thrust" several delinquents, but admitted that occasionally he "got licked like thunder" himself. Griffin and Townsend, *Georgia Journalism*, 37.

although as sectional differences grew more intense they stopped receiving abolitionist publications such as Horace Greeley's New York Tribune.

Local news items usually appeared in brief form on pages two or three. The items were gathered or written by an editor or assistant editor, although increasingly many newspapers depended on volunteer correspondents to supply them with news from the more rural areas. Not surprisingly in such an agrarian society, weather and farm reports were the most popular local news items in Georgia's press. Editors and correspondents regularly commented on how the weather was affecting local farmers. Blights and pests also received plenty of attention. And the arrival of the first peach or the season's size of a locally grown tomato was duly noted by most editors.²¹

Besides the weather and farm news, crime and accidents were the few areas of local news reported with any regularity. Incidents of vandalism, thefts, robberies, and murder appeared in all the state's papers. Most of these accounts were largely factual and avoided the sensationalism that had begun appearing in the penny press. Accidents,

²¹On the eve of the war, even farm reports were a way for editors to declare the Southern way of life superior. The editor of the Liberty Patriot noted that a local woman had brought by the newspaper office a cabbage weighing seven and one-half pounds. He declared it "the finest cabbage we ever saw," adding, "[i]t proves this in regard to northern independence--that in all things we can compete with the North, and generally surpass them." Liberty Patriot, "Thanks," 7 January 1861, 3.

such as fires and drownings, also received a paragraph or two, especially if they involved prominent citizens. To a lesser extent, community gatherings also appeared in Georgia's newspapers. In the larger cities, concerts and speakers received attention, while in the smaller communities the same often was limited to picnics and dances, usually part of holiday celebrations. In the decade prior to the war, some of the state's larger dailies began publishing sports news for the first time. The news usually was limited to two pastimes, horse racing, the traditional sport of the South, and a new game, baseball.

Surprisingly, local politics and elections received scant attention by the state's newspapers. Meetings of local governmental bodies often went unreported or received a few short sentences. And most editors covered races for political office by simply listing the results. Organized religion also was all but ignored, despite the important cultural and moral role it played in the state. Most newspapers limited their coverage of religious news to announcing revivals or the appearance of a prominent preacher in the community.

On the other hand, newspapers of the period gave considerable space to fiction, poetry, and humor, generally used as fillers. Except for the poetry, which often was locally written, most of the features came from exchanges. Longer pieces of fiction were serialized and appeared over the course of several weeks. Most of the numerous lines

were directed at male readers with a few stock themes used over and over in a variety of jokes. In a battle of wits, for example, the country bumpkin always got the better of the city gentleman. And it required more skill to court a widow than a maid.²⁷

State and national affairs dominated the news and editorial pages of Georgia's newspapers during the three decades prior to the war. The state's newspapers, with only a few exceptions, were staunchly partisan. As was the case throughout the North, in most of Georgia's larger cities, and even some of the smaller towns, at least one newspaper sided with the Democratic Party, while another represented the viewpoint of the Whigs and later the Republicans.

In Savannah, the Republican was a conservative journal which supported the Whig Party. Its rival, the Morning News was one of the few independent journals, not aligned with either party. The Augusta Constitutionalist, one of the state's oldest and best-known publications, was a militantly Democratic paper favoring Southern rights. The Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel was more conservative. Three newspapers were published in Columbus. The Times was staunchly Democratic, while the Enquirer and Age sided with the Whigs. Atlanta was home to several newspapers with the best-known being the Intelligencer and the Daily City Guardian. Both were rabidly secessionist journals. In the

²⁷Griffin and Townsend, Georgia Journalism, 42-43.

state's capital, Milledgeville, the Federal Union was staunchly Democratic, while the Southern Recorder was a more conservative publication. The Atlanta Southern Record supported the Democrats while its competitor, the Southern Watchman, sided with the Republicans. Mason's lone newspaper, the Tribune, was a secessionist paper. Among the best-known newspapers in the state's smaller towns were the Albany Patriot, LaGrange Reporter, Rome Courier, Sandersville Central Georgian, and Thomasville Enterprise. Of these, only the Central Georgian declared itself independent.³⁸

Sectional Differences Widened

Georgia's editors had watched and, in some ways, contributed to the growing sectional differences between the South and North that gathered steam in the three decades before the war. They had reported and often commented on the milestones which contributed to the breakdown between the two regions: Nat Turner's slave rebellion, the compromise of 1850, Senator Preston Brooks' caning of Senator Charles Sumner, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin, as well as many other less significant events.³⁹ Although the state's newspapermen disagreed on how

³⁸ Political affiliations listed are based on several sources, including Green, Growth of Southern Nationalism; William Griffiths and Tedlow, Georgia Journalism, 42-43; and Reynolds, Mississippi News, 322-324.

³⁹ See generally, Green, The Growth of Southern Nationalism.

differences between the two regions should be resolved, they were united in their belief that the rights of the South and Georgia had to be protected. And the right to own slaves was at the cornerstone of these beliefs.³⁰

Editors and the rest of their Southern brethren had weighed the swelling opposition in the North to the South's "peculiar institution." They, in turn, vigorously defended slavery as a necessity for the region's continued prosperity and security.³¹ Editors also criticized the efforts of abolitionist leaders and made it known they were not welcome in Georgia. When a Connecticut man was found proclaiming his abolitionist views in Warrenton, he was escorted out of the state prompting the *Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel* to comment, "We are not, under ordinary circumstances, the advocates of the side of Judge Lynch, but there are numerous extraordinary circumstances, and this is one, where its enforcement is altogether the most corrective of the crime."³²

³⁰Only one editor, Dr. L. F. W. Andrews of the *Macon Citizen*, dared to admit his dislike for slavery. After one critical article appeared in 1850, a committee of residents confronted him and demanded the paper cease publishing. Andrews continued publishing for several more years, however. Griffin and Talcadge, *Georgia Journalism*, 49-55.

³¹See generally, William Harvey, *The Road to Secession, A New Perspective on the Old South* (New York: Praeger, 1972); and Clement Eaton, *The Growth of Southern Civilization, 1763-1865* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961).

³²As quoted in Earl L. Hall and Kenneth C. Griggs, *The Augusta Chronicle: Indelible Voice of Dixie* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1960), 43.

When John Brown attacked Harper's Ferry on October 11, 1859, and the wild-eyed abolitionist was praised by many in the North, editors reacted with a combination of fear and rage. The editor of the Severest Morning News blamed leaders of the Republican Party for the insurrection and issued a call to arms.

What these wicked Abolitionists have accomplished . . . the blood that they have caused be shed, and the frightful scheme of insurrection, murder, and rapine which they have developed will, we trust, serve to convince the people of the South of the necessity of greater watchfulness, and of more concerted and effective means of protecting themselves from similar demonstrations of modern philanthropy.

As the new year began, talk of secession became more widespread as many became convinced that the South's interests could not be preserved within the Union. The Albany Patriot declared, "We might as well sling fusils over the dead carcass of a lionard, as to appeal to the Union for rights and justice."¹⁴ Thousands of men joined military companies, while state legislatures authorized the purchase of arms. Local vigilante committees sought out and brutally punished anybody with even the slightest Northern sympathies.¹⁵

¹³ Severest Morning News, 23 October 1859, 2.

¹⁴ Albany Patriot, 1 March 1860, 2.

¹⁵ Green, The Growth of Southern Nationalism, 309-311. See also E. Vann Woodward, The Origins of Southern Nationalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 51-52.

The political climate was so heated that aspiring publishers, eager to have a say in the state's future, started new papers with little thought of how they were going to find subscribers or advertisers.¹⁶ The Milledgeville Federal Union, converted early in 1860, "if we fail to notice the appearance of any new paper it is not from any intentional discourtesy, but simply because we can scarcely keep up with the list, they increase as fast."¹⁷ Another Georgia editor criticized the appearance of so many new journals:

The great number of papers now printed in Georgia and the immense fortunes that all of them are making, is the best indication of the increased intelligence of the state. We are now receiving so much money that it will be necessary for us to employ sixteen bank officers to count the weekly receipts. The field of newspaper enterprise is an inviting one to those who desire to amass rapid and princely fortunes, and we hope it will not be long ere every town and village in the state will have newspaper.

But partisanship in Georgia was deeply ingrained, and not even the perceived threat to slavery was enough to unite

¹⁶ Hedding Carter Jr., *Their Words Were Written* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1968), 11; E. C. Galeson, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals: An Inside View of Life in the Southern Confederacy, from Birth to Death* (Mobile, Ala.: Messip Printing, 1998), 289.

¹⁷ Milledgeville Federal Union, 14 February 1860, 2.

¹⁸ *Athens Southern Banner*, 2 February 1860, 2. Most of these new publications did not survive the first year of the war. Typical was the *Daily Free Democrat of Augusta*, launched in July 1860. Editor James M. Smythe had worked for the *Atlanta Chronicle*, but left because of political differences with the publisher. After Georgia seceded, he changed the name of the paper to the *Southern Sentinel*, but the paper died in 1861. Bell and Crooke, *Augusta Chronicle*, 28.

the state's editors against the Republican Party's candidate during the pivotal 1860 presidential campaign.³⁹ When the Democratic Party split apart during a raucous national convention in Charleston, most of the state's papers supported Vice President John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky, the champion of the Southern wing of the party. Only one daily newspaper in the state, the *Augusta Constitutionalist*, supported Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas, the candidate of the Northern wing.⁴⁰ Many former Whig journals in the state lined up behind Constitutional Union candidate John Bell of Tennessee. All were convinced that their candidate was the one to defeat the despised "Black Republican" Abraham Lincoln, an Illinois attorney and outspoken critic of slavery.⁴¹

³⁹One of the few papers in the state not to endorse any candidate, the *Dunwoody Flantern Weekly*, admitted its own columns were not as "interesting" as those of the partisan counterparts. But it hoped that Georgians could put aside their differences for the good of the South. *Flantern's Weekly*, 22 May 1860, 1.

⁴⁰The split in the Democratic Party led the owners and editor of the weekly *Cumtilla Standard* to end their amiable relations. The editor, S.M. Wilkins, supported Douglas, while the two proprietors, W.F. Goldsmith and S.M. Smith, supported Breckinridge. When their differences could not be resolved, Goldsmith and Smith sold their stakes in the paper to Wilkins. "Vindictory," *Cumtilla Standard*, 1 August 1860, 1.

⁴¹Griffin and Taboridge, *Georgia Journalists* 54-55. For editorial comment on the election by the Southern press in general, see Reynolds, *Editors Make War*, 13-148. Georgia's press paid little attention to Lincoln and the Republican Party. "Mr. Lincoln having no party in our state, we have not thought it proper to spend much of our attention upon

Lincoln's election, although not entirely unexpected, nonetheless stunned many in the press. The Rose Courier declared,

The idea of Lincoln's election has been frequently talked about it is true, but it has always seemed to be at vast distance with its hideous decoration, and has rather existed as a creature of the imagination than as one that could possibly have a realization in the practical workings of our government.

Yet Lincoln's election succeeded in uniting Georgia's newspapers against the North. A president opposed to the expansion of slavery posed a desperate threat to Georgia and the South, they argued. As the year ended, many editors looked forward to the state's upcoming convention in which delegates, meeting in Milledgeville, would consider whether Georgia should follow the lead of South Carolina and secede from the United States. "We have but three months in which to work," the editor of Athens Southern Banner declared of Lincoln's pending inauguration. "On the 4th of March, 1861, we are either slaves in the Union or freemen out of it."⁴⁹

Conventions

On the eve of the most important convention in Georgia's history, its press was convinced that the state's interests could be best served out of the Union. And, indeed, editors would prove to be among the biggest

him," explained one newspaper, Atlanta Daily Intelligence, 4 November 1860, 3.

⁴⁹Rose Courier, 16 November 1860, 3.

⁵⁰As quoted in Reynolds, Editors Make War, 140.

supporters of the Confederacy, providing both inspiration and propaganda in their news columns. Like most Georgians, few of state's editors had any idea of the tragic implications that lay behind secession. Nor were they prepared for the tremendous resources their newspapers would have to muster to cover--and survive--military conflict on such a massive scale. By the end of 1862, these "fighting editors," steeped in a tradition of partisanship and sectionalism, could only envision a glorious future for a Georgia that they believed was destined to be part of an independent South.

CHAPTER I
"WAS AT LAST"

Overview

As the year 1861 began, it had become clear to the publishers of the Willadgewille Federal Union that they had a dilemma on their hands. In just a few days, almost three hundred delegates from all over the state would be arriving in Willadgewille to decide whether Georgia would take the fateful step and vote to secede from the Union. Since the beginning of the year, three other Deep South states-- Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama--already had followed South Carolina's lead and chosen to leave. The problem for the Federal Union's publishers was clear from a glance at its masthead: The name Federal Union reflected an earlier period in Georgia's history. They declared in an editorial: "The Federal Union formed by our ancestors no longer exists, but has been changed into a Union of blinded fanatic, with unprincipled newspaper, for the purpose of ruling and oppressing the people of the Southern States." The publishers recognized that a newspaper associating itself with the federal government would hardly be popular in a state poised to declare its independence. So they announced

the name Federal Union would be changed to Southern Federal Union.¹

On the eve of the most important state convention in Georgia's history, the viewpoint of the Southern Federal Union editors was hardly unusual, although as others took such an extreme step as changing their newspaper's name. In the two months since Abraham Lincoln's election as president, the vast majority of the state's daily and weekly papers had actively supported the idea of Georgia seceding. Lincoln's election posed a direct threat to that way of life, they argued.² For editors, however, imagined what tremendous challenges secession--and war--would mean for them. Publishing a newspaper in wartime, they soon found out, was far different than during times of peace. There is little doubt that by year's end, the Southern Federal Union's owners wished the answers to all the challenges they faced were as simple as changing the newspaper's name.

Reporting the Secession Convention

Delegates to the secession convention assembled in the Georgia statehouse on January 14. Among the delegates were many of the state's most prominent political leaders: George W. Crawford, Robert Toombs, Marshall Johnson, and Alexander

¹"a change of name," Millersville Southern Federal Union, 15 January 1861, 1. In 1862, the newspaper's name would be changed to the Confederate Union.

²For background, see Donald E. Reynolds, Millersville and Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966).

R. Stephens. Two other important politicians--Governor Joseph E. Brown and Howell Cobb--were not delegates but were nevertheless seated by the convention, along with the judges of the superior and supreme courts. After the roll call and an opening prayer George W. Crawford, a prominent politician and secessionist, was elected president of the convention by acclamation. Then the convention adjourned for the day.³

On hand to report the convention's proceedings were editors or correspondents from several of the state's daily newspapers. Almost immediately they were faced with a problem. After spending a day agreeing to convention rules and listening to a few speeches, on January 18 delegates voted to go into secret session "admitting no one but the members and officers of the Convention, and those gentlemen who had been invited to seats on the floor."⁴ Newspapers protested being locked out of the convention, but the protests went unheard. Reporters were forced to wait outside the statehouse for any news to come of the chambers. The news did not take long to emerge. After several resolutions offered by secessionists were defeated, an ordinance "[t]o dissolve the Union between the State of

³Keith A. Wooster, "The Georgia Secession Convention," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, XL (1960), 21-55. For a more detailed study of the secession vote, see Michael F. Johnson, *Toward a Patriarchal Republic: The Secession of Georgia* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1977).

⁴As quoted in Johnson, *Toward a Patriarchal Republic*, 114.

Georgia and other States united with her under a compact Government entitled "the Constitution of the United States of America" was taken up by convention delegates on January 18. Early in the afternoon, delegates adopted the ordinance by a vote of 168 to 85-- Georgia had seceded.¹

News of the secession vote sparked celebrations all over the state, the press reported. In Macon a salute of 119 guns was fired in honor of the secession majority, and a chorus of thirty young women sang patriotic songs. College students in Athens burned an effigy of Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, the highest-ranking officer in the U.S. Army. In Augusta a torchlight procession wound through the city's streets led by fire companies whose engines were decorated with lights and transparencies. Newspapers got caught up in the excitement, too. The office of the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer was among the many downtown buildings illuminated. "Our feelings were so jubilant we could not refrain from demonstrating . . . in a manner no one could misunderstand," the editor announced.² At the same time, newspapers recognized the historic significance of the event. "The die is cast--the deed is accomplished and the great State of Georgia is no longer a member of the United

¹As quoted in Johnson, Toward A Racially Unified Republic, 117.

²"The Demonstration Monday," Atlanta Chronicle & Herald, 23 January 1861, 2. "The Demonstration on Monday Night," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 23 January 1861, 2.

States of America," said the Savannah Daily Georgian.⁷ "This is a date long to be remembered, referred to, dated from," proclaimed the Macon Daily Telegraph. "The ordinariness of everyday has passed."⁸

Most editors had nothing but praise for the move to secede. Many newspapers repeated the well-known litany of arguments supporting secession: Georgia bore no responsibility for the disruption of the Union. A defiant and bullying North required that the state take steps to protect its rights. What was required, newspapers declared, was unity and full support for secession. "People of Georgia, let discussion be hushed forever . . ." the Savannah Constitutionalist said.⁹ Even papers which had urged the state to proceed more slowly before seceding, preached the importance of unity. The Willedgeville Southern Recorder announced, "[W]e cheerfully sacrifice all political memories of the past which might tend to disturb the new brotherhood of feeling and action which we are

⁷"Georgia Adrift," Savannah Daily Georgian, 20 January 1861, 1.

⁸"The Convention," Macon Daily Telegraph, 21 January 1861, 1. Several days after secession was approved, the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer and several other newspapers in the state began selling copies of the ordinance of secession. Printed on good white paper and ornamented with Georgia's coat of arms, it was "suitable for framing." Copies sold for ten cents each.

⁹"The Republic of Georgia," Savannah Daily Constitutionalist, 10 January 1861, 2.

called to maintain for the good of the Commonwealth."¹⁰ Explaining its past position as secessionist, but not apologizing for it, the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel expressed similar sentiments.

We have labored faithfully--and forgive us, if it were unadvisedly--to preserve the Union. To it we cling with a devotion that knew no change and no shadow of wavering . . . We now begin anew . . . [and] say that whatever the State requires of us shall be given to the uttermost, cheerfully and obediently, to secure, maintain and defend forever against all enemies, the honor, the glory, the prosperity and the happiness of this people.

After the secession vote, Governor Joseph Brown wanted little time in having the state militia seize the U. S. Arsenal in Augusta. The Chronicle & Sentinel and the Constitutionalist carried accounts of the peaceful surrender on January 14, although the Constitutionalist's story was far more complete. The story included correspondence between the two sides as well as the terms of surrender. It also included several fine details, including the fact that the outgoing and incoming commanders of the arsenal had attended West Point together.¹¹

Two weeks later, the provisional Confederate Congress began meeting in Montgomery, Alabama. Among the Georgia

¹⁰"Georgia Out of the Union," Gilledgerville Southern Recorder, 15 January 1861, 3.

¹¹"The Republic of Georgia," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 23 January 1861, 2.

¹²"The Facts in Relation to Taking the United States Arsenal near August, Georgia," Augusta Daily Constitutionalist, 15 January 1861, 2.

editors reporting from the new Confederate capital were William Thompson of the Savannah Jolly Bore and Melville Swinell of the Even Courier. On February 5, Congress elected Jefferson Davis of Mississippi as president of the provisional Confederate government and Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia as vice president. The state's newspapers reported news of the election, but missed the backstage maneuvering that took place before the vote. Three Georgians--Cobb, Stephens, and Toombs--emerged as contenders for the presidency. All three men were widely respected and wanted the presidency, but each suffered various drawbacks. Although Davis emerged as the clear front-runner early in the debate, various delegates lobbied on behalf of all three Georgians. But the three men's handicaps--along with infighting among delegates and the candidates themselves--wrecked each one's chances. Since the presidency was denied Georgia, there was general agreement that the state could name the vice president. The delegation nominated Stephens only after three leading secessionists stalled out to avoid creating a seceder.¹³ The state's correspondents either were unaware of the political drama or chose to ignore it. Instead their newspapers praised the selection of Davis and Stephens. Typical was the Milledgeville Southern Federal

¹³For more on the maneuvering involving the nominations for president and vice president, see Walfrid Mark Turner, The Confederate Congress (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1965), 10-11.

union which said, "We doubt very much if two men could have been selected from the vast array of talent and worth in the Cotton States who would have given equal satisfaction to the people. They are wise men, good men, prudent men, and brave men."¹⁴

Newspapers reported Davis' arrival in Montgomery on February 14. Upon his arrival, the president made a brief, bellicose speech. "The time for compromise has now passed," he said. "The South is determined to maintain her position, and make all who oppose her smell southern powder and feel southern steel." Two days later, he and Stephens were inaugurated in ceremonies in front of the state capitol. Davis' inaugural speech was more compromising. He said the confederacy wished to live in peace and extended an invitation to any states that "may seek to unite their fortunes to ours."¹⁵ Correspondent Thompson of the Memphis Daily News called the inauguration "the grandest pageant ever witnessed in the South."¹⁶ And correspondent "T" of the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel noted that "Montgomery never presented such a scene as that witnessed today."

¹⁴"Our President and Vice President," Millersville Southern Federal Union, 24 February 1861, 2.

¹⁵Turner Revised, Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalists His Letters, Speeches, and Speeches, Vol. 2 (Jackson, Miss.: 1923), 47-52.

¹⁶"Inauguration of the First President of the Confederate States," Savannah Daily News, 18 February 1861, 1.

Thousands of people filled the streets and rooftops to witness the grand pageant. Bands played and the people cheered the sight of Davis and Stephens.¹⁷

At the same time the Confederacy's new leaders were creating a government, Georgia's newspapers were undergoing changes. In Atlanta, the National American, a weekly founded in 1857, began publishing a daily edition in February and also changed its name to the State City Guardian. The owners of the Guardian were Cornelius B. Hewittier and George W. Adams. The Daily Intelligencer welcomed the new paper to the city. "There should be two daily papers in Atlanta," it said in an editorial. "We never desired a monopoly."¹⁸ Later in the month, J.F. Haskinslee, a fiery secessionist and editor of the Southern Confederacy, sold the paper to the owners of the Guardian and joined the Confederate army. The Guardian changed its name to the Southern Confederacy.¹⁹ Elsewhere, J.M. Welford, editor of the Stone Southerner, stepped down and was replaced by George T. Stevill. Henry Cleveland, editor of the Daily Constitutionalist, resigned to accept an appointment as

¹⁷"The Inaugural Ceremony," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 27 February 1862, 2.

¹⁸State City Guardian, 14 February 1862, 2.

¹⁹Hewittier likewise was anxious to join the Confederate Army and he sold his share of the paper to one of the associate editors, J. Marley Smith. Henry T. Mahan, "Atlanta Journalism During the Confederacy," Georgia Historical Quarterly 37 (September 1983): 229-235.

first lieutenant in the state militia, becoming one of the first editors to join the military. He was replaced by James Gardner, first editor of the paper. Two new papers also began publishing in the state; the Daily Middle Georgian in Griffin and the Advertiser in Port Clinton.

These new publications were embarking during what were becoming increasingly difficult times for many newspapers. In an editorial celebrating its first year of publishing, the editor of the Macon Daily Telegraph no doubt spoke for many publishers when he wrote, "No business man in these times can speak or think of the future with any degree of confidence. We can only say it is quite dark enough, and resolve to make enough of a bad case." The editor said that a business slowdown had affected advertising severely, although the declining revenue had been made up somewhat by a large increase in circulation. The Daily Telegraph's expenses were averaging about two hundred dollars a week.¹⁰

While the Confederate Congress was still in session, President Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated on March 4. In his address, the president asserted his belief that no state could lawfully leave the Union and promised to enforce the laws of the nation in all the states. Lincoln was ambiguous in his plans for use of force to defend U.S. property in the South. Yet he reiterated his oft-repeated pledge not "to

¹⁰"A Yearling," Macon Daily Telegraph, 1 February 1861: 2.

quarters with the institution of slavery where it exists."²¹ Most Georgia papers printed his inaugural address with no comment. The few which editorialized treated the speech with contempt. "There is nothing in this school boy production except the threat of coercion," said the *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*.²² "His message is a plain declaration of war," declared the *Columbus Tiggs*. "We are sworn to be obedient to the laws, and if not, we are to be whipped. This is the whole question in a nutshell."²³ And the *Savannah Republican* said, "Upon the whole, we regard the Inaugural as nothing more nor less than a declaration of hostilities against the seceding States; while we consider it the highest duty of the latter to prepare promptly, and to the full extent of their means, for the worst."²⁴ The *Daily Intelligencer* was even more forceful. "We say then, to Lincoln and his sycophants, come on! we will meet you at the Phillips. We are fighting for our rights and our liberties, for justice truth, and honor."²⁵

²¹James M. McPherson, Lincoln City of Freedom: The Civil War Era (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964), 142-143. For a complete text of the address, see Roy O. Siler, ed. Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1914), 579-588.

²²Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 5 March 1861, 3.

²³As quoted in "Opinions of the Press on Lincoln's Inaugural," Savannah Chronicle & Sentinel, 7 March 1861, 3.

²⁴As quoted in "Opinions of the Press on Lincoln's Inaugural," Savannah Chronicle & Sentinel, 7 March 1861, 3.

A week later, the Confederate Congress unanimously adopted the constitution of the Confederate States of America.²⁵ Throughout the session, papers had been virtually unanimous in their praise for the work of Congress. Fairly typical was the Augusta Constitutionalist which said, "[I]t is difficult to conceive of a body of men, placed under trying circumstances, conducting the grave affairs confided to them with more practical wisdom"²⁶ "Our new government has been more propitiously begun" said the New Courier. "In all the elements of good government the Confederate states say, and we believe will, far surpass the old United States."²⁷

Still, there was no shortage of advice from the press on an endless variety of subjects facing the new government. Editors offered suggestions on everything from the design of the new Confederate flag to the color of uniforms to be worn by the army. Popular themes were the need for economic independence and the importance of growing food crops. And when word got out that Confederate leaders were considering

²⁵"Inauguration of President Lincoln," ATLANTA Daily Intelligencer, 3 March 1861, 2.

²⁶"Virtually every newspaper in the state repudiated the Confederate Constitution in its entirety after its adoption. In fact, the constitution was a standing target in many newspapers for weeks or months as editors found it useful for filling space."

²⁷"What the Public Thinks of the Southern Congress," Augusta Daily Constitutionalist, 3 March 1861, 2.

²⁸"Progress of Our New Republic," NEW COURIER, 21 March 1861, 2.

moving the capital from Montgomery, the editors in several Georgia cities, including Atlanta, Columbus, Macon, and Augusta suggested their contribution. Even little Thomsonton, in the southwest part of the state, offered itself up. "[W]e have a fine climate, a productive country, and virtuous and intelligent population," the editor of the *Upson Pilot* declared. "[W]e can supply all of the officers of the government with old bacon and fresh greens and a cigar and a bottle of old Bourbon or Fricke's Best on Saturday nights."¹⁸

The War Begins

The provisional Confederate Congress adjourned in mid-March. About the same time near Charleston, South Carolina, Major Robert Anderson, commander of the Federal garrison at Fort Sumter, was providing daily reports on his actions and those of the Confederate forces besieging the fort. It had become increasingly clear since the beginning of the year that if there was to be showdown between North and South, it would take place at Fort Sumter. Standing on a narrow granite island four miles from downtown Charleston at the entrance to the bay, the fort had become a symbol of Federal authority in the seceded states. The North could not allow the fort to fall into the Confederacy's hands. The Confederacy, likewise, was determined to keep it under control.

¹⁸"Post of the Government of the Southern Confederacy," *Upson Pilot*, 18 February 1862, 2.

Georgia editors recognized that the situation in Charleston was becoming grave. Editor Joseph Cissy of the Sacon Daily Telegraph arrived in the city March 27 to see what was happening for himself. He found Charleston searing with activity. Cissy concluded that residents were becoming "wonderfully impatient" with the delays in occupying the fort.²⁰ Residents got their wish because on April 4 Lincoln decided to send in supplies badly needed by the fort. On April 7, a federal fleet set sail with supplies for Fort Minter. Three days later, Confederate Secretary of War L.B. Walker ordered Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard, commander of Confederate forces at Charleston, to present an ultimatum to Major Anderson, demanding the fort's surrender. If Anderson refused, Beauregard was to begin firing on the fort. Anderson initially declined the offer to surrender, but after a second request the commander agreed to leave on April should he not have received supplies. Beauregard rejected Anderson's proposal, and at 4:34 a.m. on April 12 Confederate batteries opened fire on the fort.²¹

The telegraph relayed news of the bombardment to Georgia's newspapers. The Atlanta Southern Confederacy's headline, composed in large, fancy type, proclaimed: "was

²⁰Sacon Daily Telegraph, 30 March 1861, 1.

²¹W.A. Stensberg, First Blood: The Story of Fort Sumter (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1897), 243-244.

AT LAST!¹¹ In Savannah, editor Thompson of the Savannah Morning News announced the news to a crowd waiting outside the newspaper's offices. Then Thompson and James B. Speed, editor of the Savannah Republican, left for Charleston on the next train. After arriving in the city, Thompson remained at the battery until 1 a.m., watching the bombardment. He left instructions at the hotel to be awakened at 4 a.m. and by 4:30 a.m. he was back at the battery. There in the darkness, he watched clouds of white smoke curl up from the Confederate cannons firing on Fort Sumter.¹²

Some eight hours later, after a bombardment of more than four thousand shots and shells, Anderson's exhausted garrison surrendered.¹³ "Caroline," an unknown reporter for the Galveston Times, reported Sen. Sumner's reaction upon receiving news of the surrender. "Aha! Carolinians," he said a cheering crowd, "accept my warmest congratulations on your victory--not won by us, but by the gallant men who so promptly obeyed my orders. The war has been commenced; we must continue our exertions until the enemy is driven from

¹¹"War at Last!" Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 13 April 1861, 2.

¹²"Fort Sumter Taken!" Savannah Morning News, 13 April 1861, 2.

¹³In his account of the battle, Speed said onlookers praised the courage of Anderson and his men defending the fort. "The Battle of Charleston," Savannah Republican, 14 April 1861, 2.

our harbor."¹⁶ When news of the surrender arrived in Macon, the Daily Telegraph's staff rushed out a one-page extra proclaiming the news: "Our Flag Hoisted over Sumter!"¹⁷

Actually, the Confederate stars and bars was not raised over the fort until the following day when the formal surrender took place. Confederate authorities prohibited reporters from visiting the fort for several days.¹⁸ Using second-hand accounts, a reporter for the Macon Daily Telegraph described the interior of the fort as being "an unsightly mass of rubble." He also reported that Fort Moultrie, one of the Confederate forts participating in the battle, "received pay in her own coin from Sumter." The officers' quarters were badly damaged and many of the houses on the island "bore testimony to the power of the shells which were shot from Sumter."¹⁹

Newspapers reported the celebrations in Georgia after news of the surrender was received. In Columbus, cannons were fired, bells rang, and steam whistles cut off while people poured into the streets and celebrated. In Savannah, the Oglethorpe Light Infantry fired a salute. The

¹⁶"Charleston Correspondence," Columbus Times, 18 April 1863, 2.

¹⁷"Our Flag Hoisted over Sumter!" Telegraph - Extra, 13 April 1863.

¹⁸J. Oyster Andrews, The South Meets the Civil War (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), 22.

¹⁹Macon Daily Telegraph, 18 April 1863, 1.

confederate flag was raised over the Custom House, the Daily News office, and elsewhere in the city.

Georgia's newspapers unanimously hailed the victory in Charleston. "The crisis has passed--the long suspense has terminated--the thorn which has so long rankled in the side of the South has been extracted--the standing menace has disappeared--the flag of the Confederacy floats over Fort Sumter!"³⁷ declared the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel. The Athens Southern Watchman expressed more mixed feelings: "Hope is dead and we are now compelled to seek our rights at the cannon's mouth and the point of the bayonet."³⁸ Other papers, like the Savannah Central Georgian, predicted more easy victories for the Confederacy.

This is only the beginning of a series of disasters . . . which is sure to attend the further prosecution of a war forced upon us by the intolerance and villainy of a fanatical North who know not what it is to be just, but in their wicked fanaticism would thrust upon the South a tyrannical and odious government, repugnant in every sense to those who, having asserted their independence, are determined to manifest their ability to maintain it.

More realistic editors recognized that Fort Sumter was simply the start of what would be a long, hard-fought war. The Thomasville Southern Enterprise predicted that the North

³⁷"Sumter Has Fallen," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 17 April 1861, 1.

³⁸"The War Spark," Athens Southern Watchman, 24 April 1861, 1.

³⁹"The Surrender of Fort Sumter," Savannah Central Georgian, 17 April 1861, 1.

would use all its strength against the South. "[S]ooner or later, we shall have to meet a great army from the abolition States. No great empire ever fell to pieces without a desperate struggle."⁴²

Not surprisingly, even editors placed blame for the beginning of fighting on the North--and were specifically, President Lincoln. Confederate leaders, they said, warned Lincoln's administration that attempts to reinforce Fort Sumter would be met with force. But the president and his cabinet insisted on provoking the South. "[T]hey have obstinately persisted in the vain enterprise knowing . . . that the attempt would probably end in the destruction of the gallant Anderson and his little band," said the *Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel*.⁴³

On April 15, Lincoln issued a proclamation calling for 75,000 militia to be mustered into national service for ninety days to suppress the rebellion in the Southern states. Border states were included in the militia call, which meant that they would have to furnish men to put down their rebellious neighbors. Lincoln's proclamation was

⁴²"War! War! War!" *Southern Messenger*, 12 April 1861, 2.

⁴³"War and Invaders" *Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel*, 17 April 1861, 2. For similar comments, see "The War gloriously begun," *Bacon Courier*, 14 April 1861, 1; and "The First Gun," *Wilmington Southern Messenger*, 18 April 1861, 2. Historians have long debated Lincoln's motives in ordering the resupply of Fort Sumter. For a good summary of the debate, see *Schlesinger, Battle Cry of Freedom*, 171.

granted by contempt by Georgia newspapers. Several editors correctly predicted that the proclamation would merely serve to provoke other Southern states to join the Confederacy. Using its best typewriter, the Montgomery Federal Union said,

Abraham Lincoln has at last thrown off the hypocritical mask which has covered and concealed his designs for the last six weeks. His proclamation calling on the States for Militia to take the forts from us, and murder our people if we resist, is before the world. He can deceive nobody any longer--not even the old gentleman in the Virginia Convention.⁴¹

Then on April 15, the Virginia State Convention approved an ordinance of secession by a vote of 88 to 13. The press, which had long hoped Virginia would join the Confederacy, was ecstatic. The Columbus Daily Sun's headlines proclaimed, "VIRGINIA GOES!" The newspaper's Montgomery correspondent reported the reaction at the capital,

Dispatches received in this city today at noon from Richmond announced the gratifying intelligence that the ordinance of secession has passed the Virginia Convention. All hail to the Old Dominion! She adds another star to the flag of the Confederate States, and secures the union of the South against the black treacherous borders of the North. Street festivities, guns are firing in honor of the result.⁴²

By this point, the news was flying fast and furiously. Many Georgia newspapers printed the erroneous report that

⁴¹"To Arms! To Arms!" Montgomery Federal Union, 23 April 1863, 1.

⁴²"Virginia Goes!" Columbus Daily Sun, 15 April 1863, 2. The Montgomery Federal Union published an article with the news of Virginia voting to secede.

Lieutenant General Scott, a Virginia native, had resigned his commission and offered his services to his home state. Some papers speculated that Major Anderson, also a Southerner, would resign and join the Confederate army. News that the city of Memphis, Tennessee, had voted to secede, even before the rest of the state had taken the step, was hailed. And stories about Southern sympathizers attacking Federal troops in Baltimore were given prominent space.⁴⁶

Newspapers Struggle to Cover the War

The war excitement created a tremendous demand for news and Georgia's newspapers tried to meet the demand. The Savannah Daily News, Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, and Augusta Daily Constitutionalist began publishing afternoon editions before the end of the year, each declaring the afternoon papers would have "all the latest telegraphic news." In announcing its intention to start publishing an afternoon edition, the Constitutionalist also asked for understanding by readers: "If our readers meet in our columns at this time an unusual number of typographical errors, they must make due allowance, and charge a fair share to the hurry and excitement of the day."⁴⁷

⁴⁶Carled in a story from the Savannah Daily News about the excitement in Baltimore was a one-sentence note saying that Col. B. B. Lee had resigned his commission in the U.S. Army and offered his services to his home state of Virginia.

⁴⁷"Typographical Errors," Augusta Constitutionalist, 29 April 1861, 3.

But at the same time newspapers were trying to keep up with the growing demand for news, they began experiencing a problem that would plague them throughout the war: manpower shortages. Georgians, like their brethren in the South and North, had a romantic idea of war early in 1861. Caught up in the war excitement, dozens and dozens of newspaper employees around the state resigned to enlist in the Confederate Army. The editors of the Lawrenceville Central Georgian and the Rome Courier joined companies from the beginning. By the end of April, the editor, press foreman, and a compositor of the Waynesboro News joined the Burke Sharp Shooters. The Savannah Daily Telegraph reported that less than a week after the attack on Fort Sumter, nine of its twenty employees had enlisted. In May, the Constitutionalist announced that "seven or eight" printers from the city had left with their regiments.⁴² A month later, the paper listed seventeen employees of the city's publications who had enlisted.⁴³ Advertisements were immediately placed for new employees to fill the vacancies in the staffs. In the meantime, all available employees pitched in to get the paper out. Owners and editors helped

⁴²The Augusta Constitutionalist reported that of the approximately eight hundred printers who made up the printing force of the Confederacy in 1863, seventy-five percent either had been or were in the army by June 1864. See Andrews, The South Begins the Civil War, 43.

⁴³"Military Printers," Augusta Constitutionalist, 28 June 1861, 2.

compose pages and run the presses. In such cases, the quantity and quality of stories in the paper suffered. Short-staffed, the Daily Telegraph publicly apologized for the lack of new reading material in its paper and asked for patience by readers.

Immediately after fighting began, resourceful editors began making arrangements with correspondents to report the war. Georgia's newspapers used three types of reporters during the war: full-time correspondents, editors and writers who covered stories from time to time, and soldier correspondents. This last type made up the greatest number. More than forty soldiers, both officers and enlisted men, corresponded for the state's newspapers during the war. Most were friends of an editor and either volunteered or were asked to send an occasional letter with war news back to their hometown paper. Many, going by pen names like "Maynard," "Orderly," "Occasional," "Private," and "Ready," often sent in only three or four letters and then were never heard from again. Others, such as "J.T.B." of the Columbus Daily Enquirer, "Iron" of the Savannah Courier, and "Wright" of the Augusta Constitutionalist, sent regular correspondence for years. Soldier correspondents generally received no financial compensation, and the quality of their work varied greatly. The worst wrote in the inflated style of the era, had no concept of what constituted news, and were only interested in glorifying the South or their own regiment.

The best wrote in a relatively simple, straight-forward style, recognized what was interesting or newsworthy, and gave some real insight into what war was all about.

The same qualities applied to the editors and secures who occasionally filed stories from the fighting or reported on the state legislative sessions. These included David of the Savannah Republican, Thompson of the Savannah Evening News, Alexander S. Adams of the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, George Adair of the Atlanta Southern Confederacy, and J. W. Moore of the Albany Fedrier. One editor, Melville Orsall of the Rome Gazette, served in the army, sent in regular correspondence and retained his title as editor. The tireless editor sent an average of three letters a week back to his paper until he was wounded at the battle of Gettysburg and discharged from the army.

Only a handful of full-time correspondents or "specials," as they also were known, were used by Georgia newspapers, and most of these were only employed for part of the war. They included Peter W. Alexander of the Savannah Republican, Samuel Chester Hall of the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, and Henry Witherspoon of the Atlanta Southern Confederacy and the Augusta Constitutionalist. John Dutcher served as Richmond correspondent for the Constitutionalist. Most of these reporters were men of solid educations who had previous newspaper experience. To

gain access to officers and their troops, some specials sought and were given staff appointments.⁸⁰

All throughout May, newspapers reported the growing number of military companies from the state organizing and drilling: the Mason Guards, Wright Infantry, Atlanta Dragoes, Pure Grass Riflemen, Georgia Mountain Dragoons, and Columbus Flying Artillery. And when their orders were received and they departed from their hometowns, newspapers reported the proud but tearful farewells. When the Oglethorpe Light Infantry became the first company from Savannah to leave for the war, the Daily News reported that an escort of other companies, led the infantry in a parade down the streets while a band played "Sold Soldier Boy." At one stop, several young ladies presented the company with a new silk Confederate flag and speeches were made praising the bravery of the men. Finally, amid cheers and the waving of handkerchiefs, the troops boarded cars at the Central Railroad Depot.⁸¹

Meanwhile on the editorial pages, the same newspapers kept up a steady stream of editorials denouncing the

⁸⁰Alexander apparently was particularly adept at gaining access to officers and occasionally he was even invited to dinner parties with them. One evening he enjoyed shared cigars and baked spiced with General Joseph E. Johnston and several other officers. "The cigars were good, but the possum was better," Alexander reported. "Our Special Correspondent, Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 18 November 1861, 2.

⁸¹"Departure of the Oglethorpe Light Infantry," Savannah Morning News, 23 May 1861, 1.

inevitability of the Confederate army and expressing stout confidence that the South would triumph when it met the North again on the battlefield. The Knox Courier summed up the attitude best:

We cannot, we must not be subdued. Can twelve million people born to command, cradled and nurtured in the fields of adventure and daring, skilled in the use of fire-arms, and in whose veins runs the purest of Anglo-Saxon blood--fighting for their own firesides and children, can such a people be compared by the numerous hordes of the North, however numerous they may be? Never, never!²⁷

This arrogance soon crossed over into even sterner, a characteristic that would be seen throughout the war. The Knox Daily News reported with great bravado that,

Dr. Holmes, of New York, the celebrated embalmer, has received a commission as Surgeon in the United States Army. His duty will be to embalm all those killed in battle, whose bodies it is desirable to preserve. Dr. Holmes is likely to have his hands full.

With no fighting to report, other news found its way into the state's newspapers. On May 18, the Confederate Congress voted to move the capital to Richmond. Later in the month, Rytheurpe College in Millersville brought its school year to a close two months early "on account of the agitated state of the times," according to the Millersville Southern Advocate. The Reverend F.E. Thimbley reminded the eighteen graduates of their obligation to support the Confederacy and "the just cause for which it was belling--"

²⁷"the tale before the storm," Knox Courier, 4 May 1861, 3.

²⁸Knox Daily News, 19 June 1861, 1.

the maintenance of our honor and our rights."⁵⁴ The death of senator and former presidential candidate Stephen Douglas also was noted in many newspapers. The Millersville Southern Recorder called him one of the great statesmen of his era saying, "Objectionable as the public life of Mr. Douglas has been to the South of late years, we accord to him an intellectual rank with names which will live forever."⁵⁵

The Battle of First Manassas

By June, Virginia was making active preparations for war. President Davis had decided to pursue a generally defensive policy and hope for intervention from Europe. Davis had between 20,000 and 40,000 troops to repel any attack. They were scattered about: guarding the naval base at Norfolk, protecting Richmond, in the vicinity of Fredericksburg, and at the crossroads community known as Manassas, between Richmond and Washington. To cover the fighting anticipated in Virginia, correspondents from the South's largest dailies began arriving in Richmond.⁵⁶

Among the group was an attorney from Thomson, Georgia who would become one of the best-known correspondents of the war. Peter F. Alexander had been lured away from his law

⁵⁴"University Exercises," Millersville Southern Recorder, 4 June 1861, 3.

⁵⁵"Death of Senator Douglas," Millersville Southern Recorder, 14 June 1861, 3.

⁵⁶Andrew, The South Reports the Civil War, 48-49.

practice to serve as a correspondent for the Republican and the Southern Confederacy. Writing under the bylines "P.F.A." and "A," Alexander would spend the next four years covering the Confederate Army. He was at the scene of many of the war's major battles, including First Manassas and Second Manassas, Shiloh, Sharpsburg, Gettysburg, Fredericksburg, Chatternoke, Wilderness, and Petersburg. His reports of these and other smaller battles were recognized for the accurate and detailed information they contained. But Alexander was more than just a battlefield reporter. Unlike many correspondents who glorified virtually all aspects of the bloody conflict, Alexander also wrote about the squalid side of the war--the horror, drudgery, and incompetence. In his reports, he repeatedly criticized the Confederate government for its inability to provide proper clothing, supplies, and medical treatment.

Born in Elberton on March 21, 1834, Alexander went on to become one of the top students at the University of Georgia, graduating second in the class of 1854.⁸⁷ After graduation, Alexander studied law, and in 1855 he began practicing in Thomson, Georgia. At the same time, he became active in local politics as a member of the Upson County Whig Party. Alexander soon began writing editorials for the Savannah Republican, at the time the leading Whig

⁸⁷"P.F. Alexander," Atlanta Constitution, 24 September 1884, 2.

publication in the state.⁵⁸ He eventually accepted the job of associate editor, and in 1853 he was named the newspaper's editor-in-chief.

For unknown reasons, Alexander left the Republican in 1857 and returned to Thomson to resume his law practice. He was elected to the state secession convention as a delegate from Upson County. Alexander and other members of the Upson Whig delegation voted against secession, but when his state decided to leave the Union, he put aside his personal views and supported the Confederacy.⁵⁹ Alexander was home in Thomson when the war began. Soon afterward, he accepted an appointment as a battlefield correspondent for the Republican and the Atlanta Southern Confederacy.

Alexander arrived in Richmond in mid-June, and a few days later he traveled to the Confederate Army Headquarters at Manassas Junction. The next day, he wrote a letter to the Republican, reporting that his vantage was within earshot of Federal army drummers. "This letter is written, therefore, as it were at the mouth of the enemy's gun."⁶⁰ To Alexander's disappointment, however, prognostications of an impending battle were premature. In the meantime, the

⁵⁸Robert Lee Bentley, Georgia Journalism of the Civil War Period (Nashville, Tenn.: George Peckedy College, 1979), 100.

⁵⁹Upson Pilot, 4 December 1860, 2. Atlanta Constitution, 24 September 1864, 2.

⁶⁰Sanborn Republican, 4 July 1861, p. 1.

Confederate War Department decided to tighten security measures to prevent the publication of any information which might be valuable to the Federal army. In an open letter published through the columns of the *Richmond Enquirer*, Secretary of War Leroy P. Walker appealed to correspondents to carefully consider everything they published. He added:

It must be obvious that statements of strength, or of weakness, at any of the points in the vicinity of the enemy, when reproduced in the North, as they would be in spite of all the vigilance in our power, would warn them of danger to themselves, or invite an attack upon us; and, in like manner, any statement of the magnitude of batteries, of the quantity and quality of arms, or of ammunition, of movement in progress or in supposed contemplation, of the condition of troops, of the Commissariat, &c, might be fraught with essential to injury to the service.

Several Georgia newspapers registered the secretary's letter and expressed their support.⁴⁰

Under the command of General Irvin McDowell, the main Federal army of 18,000 men was encamped across the Potomac River from Washington. Some twenty-five miles away, a Confederate force of 18,000 was deployed on the south bank of the Fall Line guarding Manassas. Lincoln ordered McDowell to draw up a plan for attacking Manassas. McDowell did so but protested that he needed more time to train his raw troops. The president refused to wait. "You are green, it is true," he said, "but they are green also; you are all

⁴⁰ *Richmond Enquirer*, 3 July 1861, 1. For more on press reactions to the tightened security, see Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War*, 74-75.

green alike."⁴⁰ Russell issued orders for the advance to begin July 14. Meanwhile, Confederate commanders had learned of the Federal plans from Rose G'Neal Greenhow, head of a spy ring in Washington. Davis ordered more troops brought in to reinforce Manassas. On July 18, a Federal brigade probing the Confederate line met a sharp check at Blackburn's Ford. Although losses in the brief skirmish were modest, newspaper accounts considerably exaggerated the extent of the Federal defeat. Alexander's special dispatch sent free Richmond displayed his lack of experience in covering a war. It claimed that the Federal army had been repulsed "with great slaughter" and was retreating back to Alexandria. The *Republican's* headline proclaimed, "A Great Battle Fought!"⁴¹

The real battle did not begin until July 21 when a Federal column of 13,000 men crossed at two o'clock in the morning and deployed across the Bull Run Springs Ford. The Federals attacked disjunctly, but initially drove back the outnumbered Confederates. Manassas rushed in reinforcements and fighting continued the rest of the day. Late in the afternoon, bolstered by reinforcements just off the train at Manassas, the Confederate commander ordered a counterattack. The weary Federal troops broke and retreated

⁴⁰T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals* (New York: Knopf, 1962).

⁴¹Davis, *Battle at Bull Run*, p. 113-114., "A Great Battle Fought" *Savannah Republican*, 18 July 1861, 2.

across Bull Run toward Centreville. The retreat became a rout as army vehicles became entangled with the carriages of civilians who had come out to witness the fighting. On the Confederate side, 800 soldiers were killed and another 8,400 wounded at the battle, which later became known as First Manassas. Union forces lost about 418 men killed and 800 wounded. Although the losses were roughly equal, the Confederacy was generally considered the victor.¹⁴ And Georgia newspapers proudly trumpeted the news of the battle. Typical was the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer's headline which read:

GLORIOUS VICTORY!

Frightful Report of the Battle
From Washington.

The Carnage Transcended on
both sides.

The dead and wounded of the
Army strewn on the
ground for miles.¹⁵

At First Manassas, Alexander quickly got a taste for the difficulties he would encounter in reporting the war. After the battle, he was forced to walk the seven miles from the battlefield back to Manassas Station. Arriving there about one o'clock in the morning, no doubt exhausted, he nonetheless began writing his account of the war's first

¹⁴McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 338-349.

¹⁵"Glorious Victory!" Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 29 July 1861, 8.

majors battle. The report, covered up with ample amounts of purple prose, began, "Yesterday, the first day of July, 1861, a great battle was fought and a great victory won by the Confederate troops. Heaven called upon his arm, and the God of Battles covered our banners with the laurel of glory." Concluding the report, Alexander claimed that First Manassas was "the greatest battle ever fought on this continent."⁴⁴

Alexander's account of First Manassas was a big hit in Savannah, a fact probably due more to the outcome of the battle than the quality of the correspondent's report. The editor of the *Republican* claimed that he had received "hundreds" of requests for issues containing Alexander's "able and graphic letters on the late battle of Manassas Plains."⁴⁵ Alexander's report, however, was far from complete, and to his credit, he recognized its shortcomings. Responding to a letter from a reader, he later admitted that "no full, fair, and satisfactory account" of the battle had yet been written. He then went on to list more than a dozen items that should have been included in his report, including "the brigade that first encountered the enemy. . .

⁴⁴ *Savannah Republican*, 27 July 1861, 1. Alexander certainly was not alone in the hyperbole he used. Political leader Thomas E.B. Cobb of Georgia wrote that Manassas was "one of the decisive battles of the world." He quoted in *McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom*, 147.

⁴⁵ *Savannah Republican*, 30 August 1861, 1.

the position of the several batteries . . . [and] where the commanding generals were during the fight." But Alexander also defended his account and those of other Southern reporters, blaming the problems on restrictions put on correspondents by the Confederate Army.⁴⁸

For unknown reasons, Weisell of the Knox Courier did not immediately send a report of the battle back to his paper. Instead he wrote an account of what it was like to be in a major battle for the first time. Writing in a simple and straight-forward style, he avoided the invective and purple prose that characterized the work of so many other correspondents. Weisell said the romantic visions of war he held were quickly shattered and replaced with the "ugly, dusty, fatiguing and insupportable realization" of real fighting. The editor said he feared for his life when a cannon ball came dangerously close, but after that incident he was too busy to be afraid. He went on:

As the dangers really increased, and friends were seen falling thick upon either side, the apprehension, or rather the fear . . . became strangely less, and without feeling aware there was a sort of forced resignation to calmly slide whatever consequences should come.

Weisell said he quickly became hardened to the sights of war, "the most horrid and ghastly expression of man in the death struggle, men with one arm or a leg shot off, others with the face horribly mutilated" But Weisell

⁴⁸Savannah Republican, 27 August 1861, 1.

added, "This obscurity I am truly glad, was only temporary. Only two days after the battle I caught myself avoiding the sight of the reputation of an arm."¹⁵

Two other excellent accounts of the battle published by the Georgia press were not originally intended for newspaper readers. Two letters from Confederate soldiers, written to their families, provided fine insights into the minds of the war's participants. The editors who published the letters deserve credit for recognizing fine writing. In a letter published by the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, a soldier who signed his name Whitson described the excitement as well as horror that a soldier felt during the heat of battle. He wrote,

It would have done any Southerner's heart good to have seen us charge the Rebels We charged within twenty-five steps of Sherman's battery, then dropped on our knees and commenced firing at the battery When I was firing at them men at the cannon, I was wild with excitement, but took good aim I saw awful sights, such as men's arms, heads and legs shot off, arms shot into, and bodies lying over the ground. It is too awful to think of. History can never half describe, not half.

The soldier also confessed that his enthusiasm for fighting had diminished considerably. "I have got as I do not care for anything," he wrote. "I would as soon be hungry as full, tired as rested, still as marching, writing as not . .

¹⁵"Editorial Correspondence," State Courier, 24 August 1861, 3.

... I do not feel like I will ever be able to see you all again. It looks impossible to survive another battle."⁷⁰

The Augusta Constitutionalist also published a fine letter from a member of the Oglethorpe Light Infantry to his mother that captured the horrors of war. He began the letter, "I have seen as much blood, and as many awful scenes as would do for a lifetime!" The young man, who signed his letter J.B.G., was caught in heavy firing and noted, "It is amazing that we were not all cut to pieces, for the [missile] balls passed between our very legs." Of the seventy-eight men in the company, six were killed and twenty were seriously wounded. Another twenty-nine men were hit by enemy fire, including J.B.G., but the wounds were not serious. After the battle, the young soldier spent the rest of the day helping attend to the wounded. "My hand was in blood all day," he wrote, "nothing but blood."⁷¹ A soldier correspondent for the Atlanta Daily Intelligence, H.B. Love, was moved by the ghastly sight of the enemy's dead still lying on the battlefield two days after the fighting. Conspicuous among the dead were the Federal Army's Indians, known for the fancy and brightly colored uniforms they wore. Love wrote, "The field contains some two or three hundred

⁷⁰"Virginia Correspondence," Augusta Daily Intelligence, 3 August 1864, 1.

⁷¹"The Battle of Kennesaw--A Graphic Account by One Who Participated," Augusta Constitutionalist, 3 August 1864, 2.

corps, and they look like wheat shocks dotted over it, with all their red taggery and paraphernalia."⁷¹

The high cost of the battle was brought home several days later when papers all over the state began publishing lists of the men killed and wounded at First Manassas. Among the dead was Colonel Francis S. Burton, a prominent state leader and a delegate to the secession convention. His remains were returned to his hometown of Savannah by an honor guard and lay in state at City Hall for one day until the burial. As a salute, guns were fired from the city's battery. According to the Daily News, "It was a solemn and imposing scene--the darkness of the night lit up by the flash of the minute guns, whose booming thunders gave utterance to the general grief."⁷²

Despite such losses, Georgia's papers bragged about the victory far weeks after the battle. The Athens Southern Watchman claimed that, "The Federal Army of the Potomac is broken, scattered, subdued, and demoralized--our troops are buoyant, brave, disciplined, and inspired with redoubled courage--not only ready and willing, but anxious for another

⁷¹"Virginia Correspondence," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 11 August 1861, 2.

⁷²"Arrival of the Remains of Col. Burton," Savannah Daily News, 17 July 1861, 2. For a good account of a ceremony by Georgia regiments marking the spot where Burton fell, see "Editorial Correspondence," Evening Courier, 14 September 1861, 1.

battle."⁷⁴ The August Daily Constitutionalist declared,

The battle of Manassas had rudely dispelled magnificent dreams of conquest by the enemy . . . The dreadful truth is dawning upon them as a reality, that the Northern Confederacy has undertaken an impossible scheme of conquest--that to stop short now is national disgrace and humiliation, and to go on is certain national ruin, degradation, bankruptcy."⁷⁵

Georgia newspapers also stopped up their accusations that the North was a country of barbarians fighting an insane war. This portrayal of the North was not entirely new. But after the war's first major battle, the attacks became far more vitriolic. In an editorial bearing the headline, "A Nation of Barbarians," the Willedgeville Southern Federal Union accused the North of every sin imaginable.

They rob, they kill, they bear false witness, they covet their neighbor's ox, his wife, his man and maid servants, they commit adultery, they are idolaters, indeed they have violated every article of the decalogue, and stand before the nations of the earth, disgraced and degraded beyond the level of the savages of the South Sea Islands . . . In this people are to be found all manners and perversity boiled down to an extract, pure and simple. Thanks be to the God that made us; we are no longer of them.

Other papers took a more subtle approach, making only oblique references to war crimes by the Federal army, while at the same time praising the bravery of Confederates

⁷⁴"The Great Battle of Manassas," Athens Southern Richmond, 31 July 1861, 2.

⁷⁵"The Grand Designs of the Enemy," Manassas Constitutionalist, 28 July 1861, 2.

⁷⁶"A Nation of Barbarians," Willedgeville Southern Federal Union, 3 September 1861, 2.

troops. The Augusta Daily Constitutional, for example, said the South should never retaliate for crimes committed by the North. The paper wrote, "[L]et us not imitate the vindictiveness and ruthlessness for seeking to subjugate us . . . Let the horrors of war belong to them alone--let humanity still hold her place with us; and we who are fighting for liberty, for home, and for fire-sides will never have cause to regret it."⁷⁷

It did not take long for Alexander to show that he was not going to be a passive observer of the Confederate army and its operation. In a letter published by the Savannah Republican in August, the correspondent criticized soldiers who carried alcohol and knives. Alexander reported that drunken soldiers often got into fights and injured or killed one another with the weapons. In those language he wrote:

A drunken soldier, with a revolver stuck in his belt on one side and Bowie knife on the other is about as fit to go at large as an infuriated madman; and the authorities ought to see to it that no more men be suffered to enter the service unless they leave all such weapons at home, where they may be needed.⁷⁸

In September, Alexander wrote the first of what would be many letters critical of the Confederate government and its running of the army. He noted the resignation of Secretary

⁷⁷"humanity in war," Augusta Constitutional, 4 August 1861, 2. For similar stories, see "Richmond Correspondence," Columbian Times, 3 August 1861, 2; and "deplorable condition at the North," Atlanta Southern Record, 4 September 1861, 2.

⁷⁸Savannah Republican, 18 August 1861, 1.

of War Walker and said it was "not regretted in the army." Although describing Walker as a fine individual, who had the best interests of the Confederacy at heart, the secretary lacked the whille for the job, in Alexander's view. The correspondent said the secretary lacked the necessary administrative abilities and had squandered opportunities to secure supplies badly needed by the army.⁷⁹

By the fall, it was becoming increasingly evident that Georgia's press was experiencing financial problems. Several papers, including the Independent Blade in Newnan, suspended publication. Advertising in most papers was off by one-third or more. And virtually every paper in the state publicly appealed to delinquent subscribers to pay their bills. "Few there are on our books who do not owe us for one or more year's subscription . . ." the Southern Federal Union said. "Send us \$2, \$4, or \$6, just (as above as) you think you owe some to the nearest amount."⁸⁰ The publisher of the Athens Southern Watchman announced how

⁷⁹Memphis Dispatch, 26 September 1861, 1. Historians have agreed with Alexander's criticism of Walker as secretary of war. See Burke J. Hendrick, Slaves of the Lost Cause: Jefferson Davis and his Cabinet (New York: Literary Guild, 1959), 176.

⁸⁰"An Appeal," Spartanville Southern Federal Union, 14 April 1861, 1. The Spartanville Central Georgian said that on May 1 it had 1,146 subscribers. Since then, it had ceased sending the paper to three hundred who were in arrears from two to seven years. Of 1,000 subscribers remaining, seven hundred were arrears from one to two years. "To the Editors of the Central Georgian," Spartanville Central Georgian, 1 July 1861, 2.

arrangements for subscribers who were late in paying for their papers.

Those related to us, who find it inconvenient to pay in money, may send us any kind of country produce--corn, wheat, flour, oats, rye, butter, lard, chickens, fowls, chickens, eggs--anything that can be eaten or worn, at that will answer for fuel. Now there is no longer any excuse for delinquents.

In Augusta, the Constitutionalist was among several newspapers in the state printing on a smaller sheet. Its rival, the Chronicle & Sentinel, was forced to print several issues on yellow paper because of a lack of regular newsprint.⁴¹

Gubernatorial Election

With the arrival of fall, war news took a backseat to Georgia's gubernatorial election. Governor Joseph E. Brown was completing his second term and only one other governor in Georgia history had served three terms. By mid-year Brown still had not announced his plans publicly, although he confided to friends that he was inclined not to run again.⁴² On August 12, Jared I. Whitaker, owner and editor of the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, submitted two questions for Brown in the newspaper: did he support holding a convention to nominate a candidate for governor? Would he

⁴¹"Country Produce," Athens Southern Messenger, 1 September 1861, 2.

⁴²Earl L. Hall and Kenneth G. Coakley, The Augusta Chronicle: Independent's Yellow of Slaves, 1783-1883 (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1962), 37.

⁴³Joseph E. Parks, Joseph E. Brown of Georgia (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 154-155.

accept nomination for re-election? Brown replied in the newspaper that he saw no need for a convention. As for running for another term, the governor said, "I cannot refuse to serve if the masses of the people . . . demand my services for another term."⁸⁰

But opponents of Brown, with precedent on their side, organized a convention to be held in Milledgeville on September 11 in the hopes of putting other names on the upcoming ballot. The Milledgeville Southern Federal Union correctly observed "The convention instead of being a representative body, bids fair to be a mass meeting of nearly all the enemies of Governor Brown."⁸¹ Delegates from 28 of the state's 133 counties attended the convention. The Atlanta Southern Confederacy charged that the gathering was not truly representative of the state's voters. As for the plans for harmony regularly heard by organizers, the paper claimed that "the harmony which they advocate means that everybody else must think as they think, and act as they act or else everybody else is wrong and there is no harmony."⁸²

The convention nominated a prominent Meade attorney, Benjamin B. Fickett. A one-time moderate who had become an ardent secessionist, Fickett had introduced the ordinance of

⁸⁰Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 14 August 1861, 2.

⁸¹Milledgeville Southern Federal Union, 27 August 1861, 2.

⁸²Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 18 September 1861, 2.

secession at the Georgia convention. In an acceptance letter published by many papers, he said his most pressing duty would be "to wield all power of the State on a bold and determined prosecution of the war."¹⁷

Nisbet was overwhelmingly supported by the state's press, including the Republican Chronicle & Herald, Daily Telegraph, Daily Times, Southern Constitution, Southern Recorder, Southern Banner, Athens Patriot, and Southern Enterprise. Among the handful of papers supporting Brown, the West-browns included the Atlanta Intelligencer, Southern Union, and Columbus Farmer & Stock. Several papers called themselves neutral including the Daily News, Columbus Sun, and Southern Watchman.¹⁸

The Southern Banner said Nisbet had "those traits of character and mind that at once bespeak him the man for Governor of Georgia at this time The ability exhibited by him in every position to which he has been assigned, will be a sure guarantee for a safe and careful administration of the duties of the office of Governor."¹⁹ But most editorials on the election focused on criticisms of Brown rather than on the qualities of Nisbet. Many papers

¹⁷Parke, George E. Brown of Georgia, 140.

¹⁸The Athens Southern Banner at one point counted twenty-four newspapers for Nisbet, six for Brown, and eight who were neutral.

¹⁹As quoted in "Biographical Sketch of Hon. E.A. Nisbet," Georgia Constitutionalist, 11 September 1861, 1.

criticized Brown for his increasing inability to get along with the Davis Administration. " Harmony between our State and Confederate Administration is, at this time, of vital importance," the Oswego Standard argued. "a refrain heard often during the campaign. 'Of all the Governors of the Confederate States, Governor Brown alone has been unable to act in perfect accord with President Davis.'⁹⁸ But the most favorite theme of the attacks on Brown was his desire for a third term as governor. The Savannah Republican said, "When a man exhibits such selfishness and greediness for office, he loses the popular sympathy and gains the popular condemnation, if not disgust."⁹⁹ The Upson Agent said that Brown was afflicted with "a disease called the big head, which is apt to be caught by men of great ambition and small brains. I stated a great deal--'The state, that's me!'"--is written upon all his public acts."¹⁰⁰ The Constitutionalist said, "It is an insult to the patriotism and talent of the State, to say that there is, within her limits, but one man who can guide her safely through the present crisis--and that man is Gov. Brown."

⁹⁸As quoted in "Sentiment of the Press," Savannah Republican, 13 September 1861, 1.

⁹⁹"Will Governor Brown Retire?" Savannah Republican, 13 September 1861, 1.

¹⁰⁰As quoted in "Sentiment of the Press," Savannah Republican, 13 September 1861, 1.

The most vocal supporters of Brown were the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer and the Milledgeville Southern Federal Union, both of which had stakes in the governor's re-election--an opportunity regularly pointed out. The Southern Federal Union held the state printing contract, while Whitaker, the Daily Intelligencer's owner, had been appointed chief of the state's Quartermaster's Corps. The Southern Union never mentioned the contract in its editorials supporting Brown. Instead, it portrayed Brown as a champion of the average citizen who fought against the special interests and politicians representing the state's aristocratic families. Shrouding his humble roots, the paper said, "He has always been a favorite with the people, because they have always found him honest and faithful to their interests."⁸³ The Daily Intelligencer was such a vocal supporter of Brown that it made a special point several times to announce that the paper was not "Gov. Brown's organ"--as some accused it of being. Whitaker, admitted he had received some patronage from the Brown administration, but argued he had always "rendered a fair equivalent for the compensation received."⁸⁴ Like the

⁸³"Gov. Brown, Never a Favorite with the Politicians," Milledgeville Southern Federal Union, 27 August 1861, 2.

⁸⁴"Gov. Brown and the Intelligencer," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 13 August 1861, 2.

Southern Union. The Daily Intelligencer portrayed Brown as a champion of the average Georgian. The paper asserted,

It is the men of the Banks, the Railroads, and other Corporations, assisted by disappointed office seekers and baffled schemers, to arrange themselves upon Governor Brown, because as the CHIEF EXECUTIVE he has as his only guide for official duty the CONSTITUTION and the LAW, and gave the great masses of the people the same rights that he did these so-called capitalists and privileged classes.⁷⁶

Brown easily won a third term, garnering 44,894 votes compared to 32,802 for Hicker. Brown lost most of the state's largest counties, including all those with major cities. But his widespread appeal among the state's large number of rural voters overcame opposition in the larger population centers.⁷⁷ The Daily Intelligencer and Southern Federal Union could not sustain their grip on the outcome of the election. "No work for the vaunted influence of the press," cried the Southern Federal Union. "The people were ahead of the press, in the late election, and have administered a rebuke to their mast."⁷⁸

There was no such division among the state's press during the presidential election a month later. Stressing the need for national harmony, newspapers unanimously supported President Davis and Vice President Stephens.

⁷⁶"The War Against Gov. Brown and the Liberties of the People," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 28 September 1861, 2.

⁷⁷Teebe, Joseph E. Brown of Georgia, 182-183.

⁷⁸"The Press and Gov. Brown," Millersville Southern Federal Union, 8 October 1861, 2.

typical of the editorial content was the Southern Recorder which said,

Let the freemen of Georgia turn out in their strength, and show by their action at the ballot box that there is but one voice, one sentiment, one determination, and that is to endorse and sustain our illustrious President and Vice President in the midst of the war for our personal liberty and for our national independence.¹⁴⁹

As the year drew to a close, Georgia's coast was becoming increasingly threatened by the Federal fleet. During the first week in November, a Federal naval expedition, consisting of forty-one vessels, captured Fort Royal and Hilton Head, off the South Carolina coast, and threatened the Georgia coastline. Confederate Commodore Josiah Tattnall's so-called "Mosquito Fleet," composed of a river steamer and four tugboats armed with guns, attacked the Federal fleet but was forced to retire.¹⁵⁰ The fighting alarmed the state's press. After several reports of Federal activity, the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer said not enough had been done to drive the enemy away from the Georgia coast. "Let us wake up to meet the vandal foe," the paper exhorted.¹⁵¹ The Willedgeville Southern Federal Union,

¹⁴⁹"Presidential Election," Willedgeville Southern Recorder, 8 November 1861, 2. For similar sentiments, see "The Presidential Election," Savannah Chronicle & Herald, 25 October 1861, p. 1; and "The Presidential Election," Augusta Constitutionalist, 21 September 1860, 2.

¹⁵⁰E. Donn Bryson, Confederate Georgia (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 84-87.

¹⁵¹"The News," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 12 November 1861, 2.

meanwhile, suggested arming civilians with pikes if not enough guns could be found. "The times call for determined action," the paper declared.¹⁰⁰

By December, it was obvious that the war was going to last throughout the winter. The need for shoes and war clothing for Confederate troops was not lost on Peter W. Alexander, who was proving himself to be a true friend of the common soldier. In two reports published in December, he stepped up his criticism of Confederate officials begun earlier. Stressing the need for shoes for soldiers, Alexander wrote, "men may fight with clubs, with bones, with stones, with their hands; but they cannot fight and march without shoes."¹⁰¹ Some of his harshest language was directed at the Confederate Medical Department. Their treatment of the troops often was brutal in his view. Alexander went on to write,

The supply of medicines is very meager. And yet it is notorious that there are medicines enough in the towns and villages throughout the Confederacy to supply the Army and the people. Meanwhile, the best and bravest men who ever drew a sword are dying for want of those medicines.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰"The Times Call for Decisive Action," *Milladesville Southern Federal Union*, 19 November 1861, 9.

¹⁰¹*Savannah Republican*, 20 December 1861, 1. For more on problems with the Quartermaster Corps, see Richard G. Coff, *Confederate Supply* (Durham, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 24-25.

¹⁰²*Savannah Republican*, 20 December 1861, 1. Shortages of drugs and medicines in the Confederacy are discussed in Mary Elizabeth Maeser, *Drugs in the Confederacy* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1987).

The first Christmas of the war passed quietly in Georgia and with little notice by most papers. The subdued celebration was "eminently proper," according to the Athens Southern Watchman. "At a time when war is desolating our land . . . we do not believe that noisy and expensive demonstrations of hilarity would have been at all becoming," the editor wrote.¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, editor Swinell of the Knox Courier spent a gloomy holiday with his company in their camp near Centerville, Virginia. He reported that two members of the company had died a few days earlier from illnesses not related to fighting. The rest of the company spent a cold Christmas quietly. The only interruptions came from "spiritual manifestations," which Swinell attributed to the egg nog served.¹⁰⁹ The scene was not much brighter in Tennessee where correspondent "A.M.M." of the Memphis Central Dispatch and his company were camped. The men spent the day felling trees for their winter quarters and afterwards had a dinner of boiled beef and baker's bread, he reported. Back in Georgia, two more newspapers shut down before the end of the year. Citing dwindling revenue and manpower problems, the publishers of the Thomsville

¹⁰⁸"Christmas," Athens Southern Watchman, 1 January 1863, 2. For another editorial writing a similar theme, see "Christmas Day," Augusta Constitutionalist, 27 December 1861, 3.

¹⁰⁹"Editorial Correspondence," Knox Courier, 7 February 1863, 1.

Enterprise and the Washington Independent announced they could no longer continue publishing.¹²⁶

Conclusion

The war, which some editors had confidently predicted would last only a few months, showed no signs of ending soon. Although only one major battle had been fought, the war already was having a tremendous impact on Georgia's newspapers. Many employees, including some editors, had left their papers to fight with the Confederate army. Resulting shortages in manpower and problems in securing printing materials, had many papers to reduce their size. Other papers, crippled by declining advertising revenues, ceased publishing. But the early months of the war also revealed that Georgia's correspondents were capable of producing outstanding work. Editors showed that they recognized the vital role propaganda would play in keeping readers supporters of the Confederacy. And in the case of the gubernatorial election, they showed that even while war was raging, they valued their editorial independence and were not afraid to criticize elected officials.

¹²⁶"Suspension," Thomasville Southern Enterprise, 23 December 1861, 2.

CHAPTER I
"THE SILENCE NEVER LOOKED BRIGHTER"

DISCUSSORY

The year 1862 began with Georgia editors praising it as one that would be long remembered and expressing high hopes for the year ahead. The Augusta Constitutionalist declared, "The Southern Confederacy, in a few months, has given free seven weak States to thirteen large and populous States; it has shown its ability to cope with its powerful and haughty antagonists; and the pages of its history will shine with the recorded glories of . . . victorious battlesfields . . ."¹ And the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer said, "We are cheered with the prospect before us, and doubt not that its close will find us again at peace with the world, enjoying the blessings of a government of free and sovereign states."²

As they had done the year before, editors were proving to be some of the best propagandists in the South. Georgia's newspapers exulted in every victory and decryped every loss, at the same time criticizing "crackpots" and South-finders, while urging citizens to do their best for the

¹"The New Year--1862," Augusta Constitutionalist, 1 January 1862, 2.

²"The New Year," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 1 January 1862, 2-

Confederate cause. But 1862 would test their ability to be continually optimistic. Major setbacks on the battlefield showed the Federal army to be a worthy and courageous foe. The stepped-up level of fighting also would test the reporting abilities of the state's correspondents who were still learning how to report a war. Finally, a lack of manpower and materials would test the resourcefulness of editors to publish regularly.

Setbacks on the Battlefield

The year began with major setbacks for the Confederacy on the battlefield. During a disastrous two-week period in February, two Confederate forts in northern Tennessee, Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River, fell to Federal forces under the command of Ulysses S. Grant. At Fort Donelson alone, more than 13,000 Confederate troops were forced to lay down their arms and surrender. The strategic consequences of losing the two forts were a major blow to the South. Confederate forces in the Tennessee-Kentucky theater were decimated and in disarray. Southern troops had to evacuate Nashville later in the month, making it the first Confederate state capital to fall. Soon all of Kentucky and most of Tennessee were under Union control.²

No correspondents from Georgia newspapers were on hand to report the surrender. Savannah Republican correspondent

²James H. Hargraves, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era (New York: Ballantine, 1968), 397-403.

Peter W. Alexander was in Richmond during February, 1862, he still felt the need to comment on the loss of the two forts. Remarking back to the incentive he used earlier in the war, Alexander wrote,

The Federal "assaults" begin to lighten his soil. The "circle of fire" with which the South was to be surrounded, already illumines the horizon. A bitter foe--sneering under former defeat, jeered at by the world, even distrustful of his own courage--now glances at our gates, a victorious and multitudinous host! . . . Fort Sumter has fallen. It is a great disaster, and has produced much pain and suffering here. The Nation bows its head and wipes its breast in bitter sorrow, but thank God! not in despair. The darkness is relieved by at least one cheering gleam--our men brought away "blood on their bayonets."⁴

Next week, editors admitted that the loss was a setback for the South, but they sought to preserve public morale by maintaining that it would only encourage Confederate forces to fight harder. "The war spirit was never so excited and determined as it was yesterday [when the news arrived],⁵" said the Colonian Daily Enquirer.⁶ Using its best hyperbole, the Augusta Constitutionalist declared,

[I]f every seacoast city, and every river town in the Confederacy should fall into the hands of the invader, he is no nearer to subjugating us than the first day that he marshaled the federal hordes for our conquest. Every success that he gains must only serve us to unshrinkable bravery, and to a more resolute determination never to submit to the degradation of submission to Yankee tyranny.⁷

⁴"Army Correspondence," Savannah Republican, 24 February 1862, 1.

⁵"The Bad News from Sumter," Colonian Enquirer, 25 February 1862, 1.

⁶"The Federal Successes," Augusta Constitutionalist, 19 February 1862, 2.

The capture of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, combined with the continuing threat to the Georgia coast, led officials in Augusta to consider the city's river defense, the *Constitutionalist* reported. A group of Confederate officers and city leaders took a steamer down the Savannah River to examine the best places to place obstructions in the event Federal forces ever got through Savannah's batteries and threatened Augusta. The newspaper also reported that a Confederate officer suggested a company of "Minute Men" be organized to help with the city's river defense.⁷

The Savannah Republican's Alexander had resided in Virginia during the early weeks of 1862. On February 22, the correspondent reported the inauguration of President Jefferson Davis and Vice President Alexander H. Stephens. Despite heavy rain, a large crowd witnessed the event and received the two men with "hearty and prolonged cheers." Davis delivered the inaugural address "with great dignity and . . . much feeling and grace." Alexander added:

It was a scene never to be forgotten. The lowering clouds above the gigantic statues of our revolutionary fathers, stern and motionless . . . the vast crowd spellbound and still, and the statue Chief of a new born Republic, standing with uplifted arm and hands, committing himself to their ruler of Nations and of men, and busily invoking his blessing upon his country and his cause! There was not a heart in that great assembly which did not involuntarily respond to the invocation, amen!

⁷"The Defences of Augusta," *Augusta Constitutionalist*, 22 February 1862, 2.

The event was anticlimactic, however. Vice President Stephens was encouraged to speak, but for unknown reasons would not do so, Alexander reported. The Georgian simply bowed to the crowd and returned to his seat.²

Soon after the inauguration, Alexander departed from Virginia to report on the increasing fighting in Tennessee. Provisions in his contract with the Republicans prevented Alexander from reporting for the Atlanta Southern Confederacy any longer. But the correspondent had made arrangements to serve as a correspondent for the Mobile Register in addition to his work for the Republicans.³ Alexander reached Chattanooga on February 18, and after spending a couple of days there made a circuitous route to Memphis, arriving in the city on March 4.

By this point, the correspondence of "F.F.A., 28" Alexander signed himself, had developed a certain consistency. Although Alexander sent telegraphic dispatches after a major battle, most of his published correspondence were in the form of long letters in which he addressed a variety of subjects. In these letters he could discuss additional details of a battle such as Fort Donelson, complain about the unsanitary conditions of Confederate camps, and praise the women of Virginia for their attention

²Savannah Republican, 24 February 1862.

³Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 18 January 1862, 1; and Savannah Republican, 3 March 1862, 1.

to the sick and wounded. The circumstances under which Alexander worked often were far from ideal. He composed his letters on everything from trains and steamships to camp chairs and fire stumps. On the nights after a battle, he frequently stayed up most of the night writing his correspondents and at daybreak galloped off to get the letters in the hands of the postal service. In camp, Alexander suffered under many of the same conditions as regular troops. Several times he became ill and had to leave the army to seek medical treatment. Although he usually did not have to march with the troops, travel conditions nonetheless could be brutal.¹⁰

The Battle of Shiloh

By April all signs were pointing to a great battle in the area around Corinth, near the banks of Tennessee River in northern Mississippi. Albert Sidney Johnston, the general who had commanded Confederate forces at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, for weeks had been planning an offensive to regain Tennessee. The Confederacy had massed 42,000 troops at Corinth. Meanwhile, Grant's army had been sent to

¹⁰On March, Alexander was trying to get to Mississippi and needed to take a train. The train was full, however, so Alexander made the acquaintance of the engineer and fireman who agreed to let him ride in the tender if he would help keep the fire stoked. After being soaked in a rainstorm, he spent the night in the back of a one-legged box. The other guests, Alexander wrote, included "one idiot, two pigs, a man with a freshly broken arm, and a number of sick, weary soldiers." "Army Correspondence," *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, 12 March 1862, 2.

Pittsburgh Landing on the Tennessee River, twenty miles north of Corinth, where it was awaiting reinforcements for an attack on Corinth. Early on the morning of April 4, thousands of screaming Confederates burst out of the woods near Shiloh Church and surprised the Federal soldiers, many still in their camps. The Union troops quickly recovered from their shock and the fighting during the day reached a level unprecedented in the war. Union commander William Tecumseh Sherman had three horses shot from under him. Johnston was hit in the leg by a bullet that severed an artery and caused him to bleed to death before he could receive proper medical attention.¹¹

"F.W.A." had reached Corinth the day before the battle but had been unable to find a horse to get to the army. So he spent the night camped on the road to Pittsburgh Landing, fourteen miles east of Corinth. The next morning he brought a wife and a hand saddle and arrived at the battlefield a little after noon.¹² Although unable to estimate the number of troops killed and wounded, Alexander reported that the fighting the first day was "hot and close and waged with great violence and fury." He concluded, "[T]he roar of artillery and rattle of musketry fairly shook the earth." Alexander also described the death of General Johnston. He

¹¹Sherman, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 408-410. See generally, James Lee McBurnough, *Shiloh--an odd battle before night* (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1977).

¹²*Knoxville Republican*, 14 April 1862, 2.

touchingly described how the general died in the arms of his brother-in-law while another soldier supported his head. But that the account lacked little exaggeration as Alexander wrote, "Thus a brave and skillful officer has gone down before the red tide of battle. He fell in the very arms of victory, with our flag upraised and advancing under the mighty impetus given to our attack by his own individual heroism and daring."¹³ Alexander was at General F.C.T. Beauregard's headquarters later that evening when a captured Federal commander, Brigadier General Benjamin M. Prentiss was brought before Beauregard.¹⁴ In one of the few times he would do so during the war, the correspondent used direct quotations in his account of the meeting. Alexander reported that Prentiss opened the conversation by saying, "Well, sir, we have felt your power to-day, and have had to yield." Beauregard replied, "That is natural sir. You could not expect it to be otherwise. We are fighting for our wives and children, for generations to come after us, and for liberty [sic]. Why does your government throw us upon us, and seek us upon our own soil?" Prentiss answered that that his fellow citizens could not allow the Union to be split apart. Beauregard said the Union was already

¹³*Anniston Republican*, 14 April 1862, 3.

¹⁴Prentiss was one of the commanders of Union forces at what became known as the "Hornet's Nest," the scene of some of the most savage fighting of the battle. McDougall, *Shiloh*, 112-111.

broken and that the lost men, women and child would willingly perish before allowing the South to give up its independence. That night Alexander slept in the tent of the quartermaster of the 81st Ohio Regiment. He wrote his account of the battle's first day of fighting on paper left behind by the quartermaster. Alexander noted that the tent had been perforated by twenty-one musket balls. As he was writing, it was raining hard and the night was illuminated by Federal artillery still firing.²⁶

The next morning resumed "another day of battle and blood," in the words of Alexander. The Federal army, which had been reinforced the night before, fought "with great spirit and resolution," the correspondent admitted. Alexander also felt compelled to report that the Confederate cause was hurt by the fact that many troops had spent the previous night enjoying the spoils left behind by Union soldiers, despite orders not to do so. Some soldiers resumed their search for loot the next morning and were separated from their regiments when the battle resumed. Alexander attributed this behavior to the fact that many of the troops were new and had clashed with the victims of the first day's fighting. Still, he wrote, "there can be no excuse for the disgraceful proceedings. . . . It is hoped

²⁶"My correspondence," *Savannah Daily*, 14 April 1862, 1.

that the experience of this day will not be thrown away either by our officers or soldiers.¹⁴

Georgia newspapers at first proclaimed Shiloh as another major Confederate triumph. The Atlanta Daily Intelligencer called the battle a "complete victory," while a headline in the Augusta Constitutionalist declared, "Another Marston's Root!" Gradually, however, details of the fighting began to emerge. Editors tried to cushion the bad news, but the long lists of casualties many newspapers printed for weeks afterward told the story. Nearly 10,000 Confederate soldiers were killed or wounded, more than double the number of casualties in the war's previous major battles combined.¹⁵

Fighting in Georgia

Four days after the bloodbath at Shiloh concluded, the Savannah Morning News reported the news that everyone in Georgia's port city had been expecting: "The Rebels commenced the bombardment of Fort Pulaski yesterday morning about 7 o'clock."¹⁶ The pentagon-shaped fort, constructed of masonry, had been under threat since late 1861 when Union forces landed on nearby Tybee Island. The Federal troops, commanded by Captain Quincy A. Gillmore, erected eleven batteries containing thirty-six heavy guns and mortars.

¹⁴McKeebaugh, Shiloh, 4-5.

¹⁵"The Bombardment of Fort Pulaski," SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS, 11 April 1862, 1.

Defending Fort Pulaski were forty-eight cannons and a garrison of 185 troops commanded by Colonel Charles S. Gilchrist.¹⁸

In February, Union forces removed obstructions placed in the river and managed to cut off the fort from Savannah. After a siege of several weeks, Gilchrist demanded the fort's surrender early in the morning of April 12. Gilchrist refused and later that morning, Union artillery opened fire on the fort. The Morning News noted that the firing, which could be seen from the rooftops of homes, caused great anxiety in the city.¹⁹ Federal cannons had opened a breach in one of the fort's walls by the end of the day. The Confederate troops continued fighting, but by 3 p.m. the next day they were beaten. Gilchrist hoisted a bedsheet over the fort and Gilchrist rowed over to accept the formal surrender.²⁰

News of the surrender did not reach the city until later that evening, the Morning News reported. The enemy's guns had made numerous breaches in the fort's walls. In fact the masonry walls, previously deemed impenetrable, "offered but a feeble resistance to the steel pointed shot

¹⁸W. Ross Bryan, Confederate Georgia (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1953), 70-71.

¹⁹"The Bombardment of Fort Pulaski," Savannah Morning News, 12 April 1862, 2.

²⁰Bryan, Confederate Georgia, 71.

of the useless Parrot gun" used by the Federals. According to the newspaper, four Confederate soldiers had been wounded and none killed.²⁰ In fact, eighteen troops had been wounded and one killed.²¹

The Morning News admitted that the loss of Fort Pulaski was a "serious misfortune," but should not be considered discouraging. "[o]n the contrary, [the surrender] should stimulate us to the exertion of our utmost efforts to repel the insolent invader," the paper said.²² Other Georgia newspapers also downplayed the loss. Typical was the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel which said, "[E]xcept for something to boast about, they [Federal forces] are just about as far from subjugating the State as ever." The paper claimed Savannah was too isolated and the geography of the area, with its swamps, creeks, and forests, made it difficult for an army to travel across. Not to doubt thinking about its own location upstream on the Savannah River, the paper said Augusta's river defenses should be strengthened-- "We have a bold and enterprising enemy to contend with, as late events have shown, and he must be met

²⁰"Fall of Fort Pulaski," Savannah Morning News, 13 April 1862, 3.

²¹Bryan, Confederate Georgia, 73. Among the Confederate troops captured were two more of the Savannah Republican's editor, James Meade.

²²"Fall of Fort Pulaski," Savannah Republican, 18 April 1862, 1. Although the fall of the Fort indeed great news in Savannah, Federal troops did not attack the city until late 1864. Until then, the Federals contented themselves with reading the sea islands.

not only courage, but with the industrious application of all the means in our power."²¹

The day after Fort Pulaski surrendered, Atlanta learned that it, too, was not safe from Union threats. That day a locomotive known as the General pulled into Big Shanty station, twenty-five miles north of Atlanta. The crew and most of the passengers departed the train for breakfast, but Union commander James J. Andrews and nineteen troops remained on board. Andrews and his band had orders to steal a train and wreck the vital rail line between Chattanooga and Atlanta. With the crew gone, Andrews and his men unoccupied the General, its tender, and three boxcars and sped northward. The conductor of the General and his crew pursued Andrews and his men, using two different locomotives. The General ran out of fuel near Ringgold, Georgia, and most of the band was captured.²²

The Daily Intelligencer carried a fine account of the incident, which became known as the "Great Locomotive Chase." "A more daring act than this, we have never been called up to record," the paper noted. It went on to say that the raid proved that Atlanta frequently was being

²¹"We are on the Coast," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 21 April 1862, 1.

²²After a trial, Andrews and seven of his men were hanged. Eight others later escaped from an Atlanta jail. The remaining raiders were exchanged as prisoners of war in 1863. Ryan, Confederate Georgia, 72-74. silent film producer Buster Keaton made a 1927 film, "The General," based on the incident.

visited by Union spies and that it was proof that martial law was needed in Atlanta to "ensure our safety and detect the rascals."²⁶

As a military operation, the "Great Locomotive Chase" meant little. But it was a bit of secondary good news for the Confederacy. Later in the month, the Confederacy suffered another major setback when a Federal fleet, under the command of David Farragut, arrived in New Orleans and demanded the city's surrender.²⁷ April had proven to be the most active month of the war to date--and the most disastrous to the Confederacy. Georgia's newspapers had been shocked by the setbacks of the month. Not wishing to preserve morale, they insisted that the news was not all bad. Typical was the Augusta Constitutionalist's editorial comment on the fall of New Orleans. The paper admitted that the loss of the South's largest port was a severe blow to the Confederacy, but said there was no cause for alarm. It declared: "The sea fleets may be seized by their fleets--cities and towns may fall into their hands--but we have the interior of the Confederacy and, if need be, the woods and the mountains--in which and upon which to drive back and whence repulse the invaders of our soil."²⁸

²⁶"Lincoln's Spies, Thieves, and Bridge Burners," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 28 April 1862, 2.

²⁷McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 419-420.

²⁸"capture of New Orleans," Augusta Constitutionalist, 27 April 1862, 2.

Winter Quarters

with the large part of both armies in winter quarters for the first three months of the year, correspondents had to scramble to find news to send back to their papers. Even so, Melville Beinnell of the *New York Times* sent several fine letters that provided a picture of camp life. Beinnell's winter quarters in Virginia, dubbed "Camp Sam Jones," consisted of some four hundred cabins and two hundred tents laid out on a rocky area that had been cleared of trees. The enlisted ranks stayed in cabins, while most of the officers lived in tents. Officers did not get cabins, Beinnell reported, because the regular troops built theirs first, and by the time they were finished there was not enough lumber left for more cabins. The cabins, made of rough logs with stone and mud chimneys, presented a "rather rude and crude appearance." But they were laid out in neat "streets," each containing the members of one company. Each room, in the two-room cabins, was fifteen feet square with "a large fireplace, dirt floor, rude beds for eight or ten men, a tolerable looking table, covered with oil cloth, and a grotesque lot of rough chairs, or stools, and a mess chest." Men spent the long winter evenings reading and writing, playing games, telling long yarns, singing songs, and, when a fiddler could be found, dancing and having a

good time generally.¹²

During the fall in fighting, Peter W. Alexander addressed for the first time what would become another popular subject of his war correspondence, press freedom. In a letter to the *Savannah Republican*, he responded to General Joseph E. Johnston's expulsion of all newspaper correspondents from his army. Johnston's order followed what he believed was a breach of military secrecy by a reporter for the *Richmond Dispatch*.¹³ Alexander said that reporters for Southern newspapers should not be allowed to write what they pleased, noting that "the public good . . . should be the rule of their conduct." But he also stressed the importance of allowing reporters free access to battlefields. The Confederacy's citizens, who supplied the army with their volunteers and money, had a right to know the outcome of fighting, Alexander argued. To conclude

¹²"Editorial Correspondence," *Rich. Courier*, 13 March 1862, 2. Swinell clearly had an eye for human interest news. In another letter, he told of a woman from Floyd County who made a long trip to visit her brother who was sick in camp. When no house could be found, she walked the last seven miles of the trip on muddy roads. The woman managed to get a furlough for her brother so he could return home. "Editorial Correspondence," 13 March 1862, 2.

¹³J. Cutler Andrew, *The South Reports the Civil War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960), 141-143. The *Atlanta Southern Confederacy* warned that behind Johnston's news blackout a great deal of "unmistakably official incompetence, shameful shortcomings, and no little racialism" was being concealed. It argued that the public welfare would suffer a thousand times more from the policy of silence than from the fault of publishing too much. *Southern Confederacy*, 1 March 1862, 2.

reportage entirely would be a major blow to freedom of the press.³¹

During the rest of the year, disputes between the army's leadership and correspondents over access to battlefields and the troops became commonplace.³² In May, for example, General Beauregard ordered reporters covering his army near Corinth, Mississippi, to leave on the next train and to stay at least twenty-five miles away from the town. Alexander left Corinth and traveled to Mobile, Alabama. While there, he learned that Beauregard had pulled his army out of Corinth. Alexander tried to send a telegraphic report with the news, but the military superintendent telegraph refused to approve it. "P.M.A." appealed the decision to the military commander in Mobile, but he, too, refused to sanction the telegram.³³

Alexander generally defended the work of Southern correspondents traveling with the army, but at the same time, he recognized the faults of some members of the press corps. In a letter to the Republican he wrote bluntly

The truth is, there are correspondents with the army who inevitably magnify our successes and depreciate our losses, and who when there is a dearth of news, will draw upon their imaginations for their facts. . . . The war should be more romantic incidents and thrilling adventures than poet ever imagined or

³¹"Army Correspondence," Savannah Republican, 29 January 1862, 1.

³²See Andrew, The South Reports the Civil War, 179, 282-283, and 288.

³³Savannah Republican, 4 June 1862, 1.

novelist described; and it would be well if the writers of fiction from the army, who devote themselves to the sensational and poetical aspects of affairs rather than to the stark realities of the campaign, would remember this fact.

Georgia newspapers were divided on the restrictions put on the press by generals like Beauregard and Johnston. One supporter was the Atlanta Daily Intelligence, which said the commanders needed to concentrate their efforts on fighting the enemy instead of the press. "Is it asking too much of the Press to withhold their denunciations, at least for a time?"¹¹ The Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, however, was strongly critical of the restrictions put on correspondents by the generals.

Beauregard and Johnston seem to think that the war is wholly their war and that the people have little or no interest in it. . . . We are aware that there are many things which occur, which it is useless to make public, but there are also thousands of things occurring in an army which can do no possible harm to publish. Even, if unimportant, they constitute "news". . . .

The Atlanta Southern Confederacy said it would not make an issue of the restrictions even though it found them unjust. The paper then made an eloquent appeal on behalf of a free press in the Confederacy.

We have always entertained the opinion that a candid, properly tempered criticism upon the conduct of men holding offices of trust and high responsibility, was an important and wholesome check against the neglect of

¹¹Savannah Republican, 18 June 1862, 1.

¹²"The Press Complaining and Denouncing," Atlanta Daily Intelligence, 31 May 1862, 2.

¹³"The Want of News," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 2 June 1862, 1.

duty and the abuse of power. . . . If the press of the country did not speak out and censure the conduct of the unprincipled and incompetent, and criticize (and) the failures as blunders of even good men, the management of our public affairs would soon fall into the hands of, and be controlled by the worst of men.

In April, the Confederate Congress passed another Conscription Act requiring service of all men between the ages of 18 and 35. Most of the state's press shared the opinion of the Columbus Enquirer which said the original plan for enrolling men had been poorly conceived. Yet, the paper said, a new bill was "dictated by the necessities of the country, and from which there is, at this late hour, no escape." The welfare of the Confederacy "overrides every consideration of personal right or feeling and every inferior question of constitutional power or State sovereignty."¹⁸

Such an opinion was not shared by some of Georgia's best-known leaders, including Governor Joseph E. Brown and Vice President Stephens. They considered conscription unconstitutional and argued that it would destroy state sovereignty. In correspondence with Davis, Brown made it known that he would not permit the conscription of any military officers whom he considered necessary for the state's protection. Using his right to exempt all civil and

¹⁷"The Public Good," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 12 June 1862, 2.

¹⁸"The Conscription Act and the Twelve Month Volunteers," Columbus Enquirer, 22 April 1862, 2.

military officials necessary for the administration of state affairs, Brown included judges, sheriffs, clerks, tax collectors, treasurers, experts and various other state and local employees. These exempted persons known derisively as "Joe Brown's Pets."³⁸

With a few exceptions, the state's press condemned Brown's actions. The Savannah *Central Georgian* said the governor's course was producing "discontent among the people."³⁹ The *Savannah Republican* declared that Brown's "heart is fixed upon himself" while the soul of President Davis "yearns for the deliverance of his country."⁴⁰ Even the usually reserved *Sage Courier* was highly critical and said,

We can but regret the Governor's behavior as evidenced He is a man for experiments evidently, and what he will attempt next no one can imagine, unless it be to inaugurate himself as a dictator. For one we have experimented with his long enough, and if we ever be excused for having voted for him in the past, we will cheerfully promise to do no more.

One year after the start of the war, the financial problems of the state's newspapers were becoming more and more pronounced. A slowdown in advertising and the soaring

³⁸Arves, *Confederate Georgia*, 60-61; and Joseph H. Parks, *Joseph E. Brown of Georgia* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 188-189.

³⁹*Savannah Central Georgian*, 21 May 1862, 1.

⁴⁰*Savannah Republican*, 21 June 1862, 1.

⁴¹"Gov. Brown on Camouflage," *Sage Courier*, 16 June 1862, 1.

cost of newspaper had forced many of the state's papers to reduce their size to a half-sheet. The editor of the *Atlanta Southern Statesman* complained that the weekly recently had to pay \$8.50 for a run of paper, twice what it had cost one year earlier. Shortages of printing materials, most notably paper and ink, plagued virtually all the state's papers.⁴³ The owner of the *Atlanta Southern Confederacy* carried the following announcement in April: "We are out of paper. It is all we can do to make up enough, by cutting down our weekly and using all the odds and ends, to get out this half-sheet. We hope to have a full supply tomorrow."⁴⁴ Faced with a different problem the next month, the *Southern Confederacy* printed a rather crude appeal for help in one issue:

Printer's Have Ink,
Who has any for sale?
Where is it?
What is the price?
Why don't [sic] somebody make it better?
Nothing would pay better.
Where is ink?
Address us immediately.⁴⁵

The problem of delinquent subscribers also continued to plague virtually all the state's newspapers. In an appeal to readers with unpaid bills, J.B. Christy, owner of the

⁴³See generally, Mary Elizabeth Sawyer, *Struggle in the Confederacy* (Columbia, S. C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1982.)

⁴⁴*Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, 23 April 1862, 1.

⁴⁵*Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, 18 May 1862, 1.

Southern Enterprise, complained that the paper had more than five hundred delinquent subscribers. Several months later, and increasingly frustrated with the problem, Christy said he looked forward to the day when he could print a "special" edition with all the names of delinquent subscribers listed in it.

Elsewhere, changes were taking place at a number of newspapers. Andrew W. Reese, co-owner and co-editor of the Athens Southern Record, announced he had sold his stake in the paper and was enlisting in the Confederate army. W. J. Spaul, editor of the Cherokee Mountaineer in north Georgia, announced he was suspending publication of the year-old newspaper to serve in the army. "I gladly yield the pen," he declared, "and in its stead grasp the sword."⁴⁵ A fire destroyed the office of the Master Republican in Americus. The Republican's staff planned to publish the paper from the Americus Weekly Post. The Republican's owner, G. W. Hancock, was serving in the army. The Thomasville Weekly Times began publishing under the editorship of W. J. Woodwell. Woodwell had been editor of the Southern Enterprise in Fernandina Beach, Florida, until the town came under Union threat. He moved his press to the southwest Georgia town. Not far away in Albany, the owner of the Albany Patriot decided he could no longer continue

⁴⁵As quoted in "Valedictory," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 10 May 1863, 2.

publishing at a loss and ceased publishing.⁴⁷ In other news, A.A. Gauding sold his interest in the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, leaving Jared Whitaker as the sole owner. Meanwhile, Walter Thompson, former owner and editor of the Waynesboro News, died from injuries he sustained while fighting with the Burke Garcia.⁴⁸

The state's press also lost a well-known figure with the death of William S. Fritchard, who had been directing the operations of the Southern Associated Press. Fritchard, who had been the agent for the Associated Press in Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina before the war, started his own press association after fighting began. After his death in March 1862, his son, William S. Fritchard Jr., took over control of the Southern Associated Press. Even before the elder Fritchard's death, dissatisfaction with high cost and poor performance of the organization had been growing. A group of Confederate publishers organized a meeting in Atlanta in March to discuss way of improving news gathering, but it was poorly attended and no action was taken.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Editors closing in January of 1861, A.J. McCarthy, the restricting owner, appealed to subscribers with unpaid bills to pay them. "The amounts are not large," he wrote in an announcement, "but they are many, and when stacked up amount to many thousands." "to our readers," 9 January 1861, 8.

⁴⁸"Death of Walter Thompson," Augusta Constitutionalist, 4 April 1862, 1.

⁴⁹Andrew, The South America War Civil War, 80-88. Gabriel C. Wilson, "Confederate Press Association: A Pioneer Press Agency" Southern Quarterly 24 (June 1948): 180-181.

Fighting in Virginia

Throughout April, Union commander George B. McClellan had been pouring Union troops into Virginia determined to capture Richmond. It became clear that the Federal army intended to advance on the Confederate capital by way of the peninsula formed by the James and York rivers. To meet the threat, General Johnston withdrew his army from north of Richmond to the southeast and established his new command post at Fort Mifflin. The Federal threat was too great, however, and Johnston abandoned Fort Mifflin on May 4. Five days later, Confederate forces evacuated Norfolk with its valuable Navy yard and supply depot.

Unlike the Peninsula area, there was good news for the Confederacy coming from Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. Confederate General "Stonewall" Jackson, a brilliant strategist whose rule of strategy was "always quickly, seldom, and surprise the enemy," had been charged with tying down Union forces and preventing their reinforcement of McClellan's army. Using his "foot cavalry" as a series of swift, deceptive movements, Jackson kept Union forces constantly offguard for three weeks. Then on May 31, Jackson's tired, but proud troops badly defeated Union forces at the Battle of Winchester. The campaign had achieved its goal of relieving pressure on Richmond.⁵⁰

⁵⁰McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 444-447.

Editors were ecstatic about the year's first major victory. A headline in the Augusta Constitutionalist proclaimed:

GLORIOUS NEWS!

STONEWALL JACKSON
AGAIN VICTORIOUS!

MONROEVILLE RE-OCCUPIED
BY THE CONFEDERATES¹¹

The name "Stonewall" fast was becoming legendary. In marveling at his exploits, the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel bragged that Jackson had "swept the invader from the Valley of Virginia almost with the rapidity of a whirlwind."¹² Later, the paper said, "Jackson is rapidly making himself the hero of this war. He has has exhibited such daring enterprises, and such generalship."¹³

Closer to Richmond, no Georgia correspondents were on hand for what became known as the Battle of Seven Pines on May 31. Johnston's army attacked forces of McClellan near the Chickahominy River in confused and indecisive fighting. Reporting of the battle by the Southern press was generally poor as a whole. Reporters were not allowed within army lines and newspapers had to depend on the statements of

¹¹"Glorious News!" Augusta Constitutionalist, 22 May 1862, 2.

¹²"Jackson's Wonders," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 2 June 1862, 2.

¹³"The Progress of the War," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 17 June 1862, 2.

soldiers.⁵⁴ James S. Speed, the Southern Republican's editor, expressed his unhappiness with the poor performance of the Southern Associated Press. In an editorial note he wrote,

Whilst private individuals are telegraphing important information from Richmond concerning the late battle, we would be glad to know what the individual is doing who has set himself up as the capital as the agent of the Press and regularly comes forward with a bill for his services. . . . What are you at, Mr. Greene, that everybody else can get important information, and you alone remain in the dark . . . ? For three whole days you have been burying the dead, without finding who they are, and watching with wonder and admiration the "ghost" that reigns "along the line"--is there nothing else you can do that would better interest the public for whom you set yourself up as a caterer of news?⁵⁵

Speed's sarcastic note caused his newspaper considerable problems. Southern Associated Press Manager William N. Fritchard Jr. sent an angry letter to the Republican's owner, F.M. Rice, defending his Richmond agent and announcing his intention to remove the newspaper from his list of subscribers.⁵⁶ Fritchard later carried out his threat, although the Republican's service eventually was reinstated.⁵⁷

On June 9, Jackson's army won another major victory at the Battle of Fort Republic. It was the last major battle of what became known as the Valley campaign, a campaign that

⁵⁴Andrews, The South Reports the Civil War, 174-175.

⁵⁵Southern Republican, 8 June 1863, 2.

⁵⁶Southern Republican, 18 June 1863, 2.

⁵⁷Southern Republican, 4 July 1863, 2.

had provided virtually the only Confederate victories in a spring of continuous defeats. Jackson's army of 17,000 Confederates had outmaneuvered three separate Union forces of 15,000 men, winning five battles in the process.⁴¹

Later that same month, what became known as the Seven Days Campaign began outside Richmond. General Robert E. Lee had taken over command of the newly designated Army of Northern Virginia from Joseph Johnston who was wounded at Seven Pines.⁴² Peter M. Alexander was not in Virginia to cover the campaign. He had returned to Georgia for a period of rest. But Melville Swinell's company took part in the campaign and the editor sent several good stories back to the Mass Courier. Although the battle was victory for the South, it came at a high cost. All the fighting in Virginia the past two months was taking its toll on the troops. Swinell reported that most of the men in his regiment had been wearing the same clothes for two weeks and many were physically exhausted.⁴³

After the battle, the Atlanta Commonwealth charged that its rival, the Atlanta Southern Confederacy, had presented "an apology for McClellan's defeat." The charge

⁴¹Robert G. Turner, Stonewall in the Valley (Garden City, N. J.: Doubleday, 1972), 283.

⁴²Clifford Dowd, The Seven Days: The Emergence of Robert E. Lee (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1964).

⁴³"Editorial Correspondence," Mass Courier, 4 July 1862, 17 July 1862, 8.

precipitated an angry exchange between editor J. Henry Smith of the Southern Confederacy and editor J.B. Peterson of the Commonwealth. A duel between the two men was proposed, but it never took place.⁴⁰

The poor performance by the Federal army led President Lincoln to replace McClellan with General John Pope who took over the newly created Army of Virginia. Pope, who had been a commander during the Federal army's victorious Tennessee campaign, issued a bombastic address to his troops saying, "I come to you from the West, where we have always seen the back of our enemies." Pope's remarks were ridiculed by the Georgia press. The Atlanta Daily Intelligence said of Pope, "The boastful braggart . . . [N]ow such is need of officers, the Yankee government wish he, when it can do no better than this."⁴¹

At the end of July, Federal commanders decided to withdraw McClellan's army and unite it with Pope's forces at Gordonsville, Virginia northwest of Richmond. Confederate forces under Lee and Jackson also were moving toward the small town. The two armies eventually collided August 18 and 19 at nearby at Battle Junction, the scene of the war's first major battle. During maneuvers by Lee and Jackson, combined with ineptness by several Union commanders

⁴⁰Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 16 July 1862, 2.

⁴¹"Gen. Pope in Command of the Yankee Army of Virginia," Atlanta Daily Intelligence, 23 July 1862, 2.

Including Pope, resulted in another resounding Confederate victory. Fighting with half as many men as his two opponents, Lee had beaten back another thrust to Richmond and was threatening Washington, D.C. The result was confusion and hysteria in the North.⁴³

Unfortunately for their readers, Georgia correspondents were unable to capture the Confederate victory. The Savannah Republican's Alexander missed the first day of fighting at Second Manassas. As a result, the account of the fighting was not one of his better efforts of the war. But it does provide a picture of the travel problems correspondents often encountered. With no other way to get to the battlefield, Alexander hopped a freight train in the town of Gordonville at 7 a.m. and arrived at the terminal of the railroad at noon. From there, he found a horse, forded the Rapidan and Rappahannock rivers and arrived in Warrenton, Virginia, at 1 p.m. the following day. After resting his horse, Alexander started toward the battlefield, writing "just in time to witness, for the second time, the triumph of Confederate arms on these ever memorable plains."⁴⁴

McNeill Driscoll's company fought at Second Manassas, and the New Hampshire editor sent a letter describing the battle back to his newspaper, but for unknown reasons,

⁴³McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 534-535.

⁴⁴Savannah Republican, 10 September 1862, 1.

Beisell did not provide many details. Additionally, the correspondent was only able to describe the fighting from the savings point of his regiment, as his account lacked breadth. Still, he was honest enough to report that his company suffered "irreparable" casualties. In concluding his letter, he gave readers a foretaste of things to come, noting that it was likely the fighting soon would spread into Maryland.⁴¹

Georgia's newspapers could not contain their excitement over the outcome of the battle. The Atlanta Daily Intelligencer proclaimed,

[W]e have to congratulate ourselves upon one of the most glorious victories ever won, in this and any other age, and in this and in any other country. Our men have fought as never men before fought. Our generals have made themselves heroes, and have won an ever enduring fame.

The Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel also joined the chorus of newspapers celebrating the victory. In an editorial it said,

The skies never looked brighter than they do at this moment, our prospects were never more cheering than they are now. . . . Stonewall Jackson and his men have met Pope, McClellan, and other Federal military dignitaries, in the shock of battle, and routed them before, back, and down. Even now they may be

⁴¹"From the Field near Manassas," Acme Courier, 5 September 1862, 3. Beisell resumed his paper the battle and did not send any correspondence to his newspaper for more than a week. The editor said he was not the only soldier to get sick. They men had broken down during the march, making "quite an army of stragglers." "Editorial Correspondence," 27 September 1862, 1.

⁴²"Accounts of the Late Battle of Manassas," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 5 September 1862, 2.

thundering at the gates of the Capital, making Lincoln, General, and others, of the Rh, tremble in their very shoes.

Even Alexander, usually more cautious in his praise after a battle, was filled with pride in the army. In a letter published later, he said that the battle had proven the Army of Northern Virginia deserved a place among the great armies of history. "It stands before the nations of the earth, conspicuous alike for the genius of its leaders and the valor its men."⁴² Still, Alexander was reminded of the sight of suffering Confederate troops hungry and ill-clothed. In a letter dated September 1, he reported:

The army has not had a mouthful of bread for four days, and no food of any kind except a little green corn picked up in the roadside, for thirty-six hours. Many of them also are barefooted. I have seen scores of them to-day marching over the flinty turnpikes with torn and blistered feet. They bear these hardships without murmuring.... As for tents, they have not known what it was to sleep under one since last spring.⁴³

The lack of provisions for his army was on the mind of General Lee. Although he knew that his troops were not equipped for extensive maneuvers, Lee recognized that to stay in Virginia meant mere suffering for the army. In Maryland, where the population was believed to be sympathetic to the Confederate cause, Lee believed that the

⁴²"Our Victories," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 7 September 1862, 2.

⁴³"Army Correspondence," Savannah Republican, 19 September 1862, 1.

⁴⁴"From Our Advancing Army--Two Days After the Great Battle," Mobile Advertiser & Register, 19 September 1862, 1.

army could find provisions and perhaps enlist new recruits. On September 3 and 4, the Army of Northern Virginia crossed the Potomac River and headed toward Frederick, Maryland.⁷⁰

Still giddy over the victory at Manassas, Georgia newspapers cheered the news that Lee's army had marched into Maryland. They also expressed the still lingering hope that the state could be persuaded to join the Confederacy. The Augusta Constitutionalist said that the North "will now begin to feel . . . some of the horrors of war. . . . The difference between waging an offensive and a defensive war will soon begin to be terribly apparent to them and will have its effect."⁷¹

Upon reaching Frederick, Alexander rode into town with a Confederate general to see an old friend. As they were riding, a young woman called out to the correspondent and asked him if the officer with whom he was riding was General Stonewall Jackson. When Alexander told her she was mistaken, the woman exclaimed:

"Oh! I shall go crazy if I don't see him."

"He is not worth the good looks," Alexander replied, "but he fights like a lion."

"I know," she said, "and that is the reason I am dying to see him."

⁷⁰Douglas Southall Freeman, *R. E. Lee: A Biography*, Volume II (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1934), 250-252.

⁷¹"The Confederate Army in Maryland," *Augusta Constitutionalist*, 12 September 1862, 1.

Before rising on, Alexander told readers that he regaled her with a story about Jackson during one march. ¹⁸ That time his officers were curious to know their destination, and finally a colonel said, "General, we are all desirous to know what our destination is -- can't you tell us?" Jackson asked the officer, "Can you keep a secret?" "Oh, yes," answered the colonel. "Well, so am I," replied Jackson. The young woman laughed at the anecdote, and Alexander bade her goodbye.¹⁹

In Maryland, Alexander was with General James Longstreet's corps as it marched over the Wire Ridge Mountains. In a letter, "F.M.A." wrote that he had never seen a more picturesque part of the country. He described,

the deep blue mountains running in parallel lines, the quite valleys, the clear rocky streams, the white farm houses and lawns, barns, wheat stacks and hayricks, the great cattle grazing on the hillsides, the long dusty columns of the Confederate army threading their way across the valley and through the gaps in the mountains, and the clusters of simple country people who have gathered along the road side or in front of their houses to witness the passing spectacle.

The Skills of Sharpsburg

Within a few days, McClellan's Army of Northern Virginia had marched into the same beautiful Maryland landscape to try and stop Lee. By a stroke of luck, two Union soldiers found a copy of Lee's orders for the Maryland campaign including his plan to divide his army. McClellan

¹⁸ Mobile Advertiser & Register, 28 September 1862, 2.

¹⁹ Mobile Advertiser & Register, 28 September 1862, 2.

had the chance to destroy Lee's army before it could retreat. But with his usual caution, McClellan moved slowly and gave Lee the chance to unite his army. The two sides eventually met at the small Maryland village of Sharpsburg, near the banks of Antietam Creek. The fighting that took place on September 17 was some of the bloodiest of the war with dreadful losses on both sides. Some 3,600 men were killed and another 18,000 wounded. More than twice as many soldiers were killed in the battle as fell in the War of 1812, the Mexican War and Spanish-American War combined. Although McClellan had not achieved his goal of destroying the Confederate Army, Sharpsburg was a strategic victory for the North. Confronted with a staggering number of casualties, Lee had no choice but to return to Virginia.⁷⁴

"E," a soldier correspondent with the *Boss Courier*, described Sharpsburg as being the "hottest" battle of the century. His brigade, part of the 11th Georgia Regiment, was "badly cut up" and suffered many casualties, including several officers.⁷⁵ Alexander produced fine reports of Sharpsburg. The correspondent noted Sharpsburg as the most deadly of the war so far. He was impressed with the performance of the Federal Army and said it was their finest

⁷⁴McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 128-545. See also Stephen W. Sears, *Landscapes Turned Ash: The Battle of Antietam* (New Haven, Conn.: Ticknor & Fields, 1981), 188-189.

⁷⁵"From the 11th Georgia," *Boss Courier*, 24 October 1862, 2.

moment of the war since Shiloh. Alexander wrote his account of the battle from near an army hospital, graphically describing the carnage, with its "amputated arms and legs, feet, fingers, and hands cut off, puddles of human gore and ghastly gaping wounds. . . ." Alexander concluded succinctly, "there is a smell of death in the air." In the same report, the correspondent admitted that he had been in favor of the invasion into Maryland, but said it had probably been a mistake. He based his opinion, in part, on the poor condition of the troops. Describing the army, Alexander wrote:

A fifth of the troops are hospitalized; half of them are in rags; and the whole of them insufficiently supplied with food Since we crossed into Maryland, and even before they frequently had to march all day and far into night for three and four days together, without food of any kind, except such apples and green corn as they could obtain along the way.

In characteristic fashion, the state's newspapers decried the loss at Sharpsburg. The Acquia Constitutionalist said the retreat back to Virginia "was not from any necessity growing out of reverses to our arms, but . . . a part of Gen. Lee's plan of operations." The paper said the army likely would be returning to Maryland soon.⁷⁰ The Columbian Exchange said it would be surprised if the retreat was "anything else than a skillful movement

⁷⁰Acquia Constitutionist, 18 September 1862, 1.

⁷¹"The Recent Movements in Maryland and Virginia," Acquia Constitutionalist, 25 September 1862, 2.

preparatory to striking the enemy as unexpected and decisive blow when he least expects it. . . . Gen. Lee is not the man to be out-managed or outgeneraled."⁷⁶ During difficult periods and after defeats on the battlefield, Georgia newspapers frequently liked to compare the Confederacy's struggle to gain independence to that of the colonists during the American revolution. Earlier in the summer, the Atlanta Southern Confederacy made a quote of Patrick Henry's a standing feature on its editorial page. The quote read: "It is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in shame and slavery."⁷⁷

Several days after the battle, Alexander became ill and traveled to Richmond for a period of rest. Before he left the army, however, the correspondent wrote a moving appeal on behalf of the Confederate troops, describing the hardships they had been enduring:

The men want more clothing and shoes this winter. They must have something to cover themselves and to protect themselves from the driving sleet and from storms when on duty. This must be done, though our friends at home should have to wear cotton and sit by the fire. The army of Virginia stands guard this day, and will stand guard this winter over every hearthstone in the South. . . . Will you not clothe his nakedness then? Is it not enough that he has written down his patriotism in crimson characters along the battle-road from the Rappahannock to the Potomac, and met his bleeding front also impress their mark of fidelity up the snows of the coming winter?⁷⁸

⁷⁶"Too soon Alexander," Columbus Evening, 30 September 1862, 2.

⁷⁷Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 18 June 1862, 2.

⁷⁸Mobile Advertiser & Register, 4 October 1862, 1.

Alexander's plea for help was reprinted by many other Southern newspapers and earned him widespread praise. The Richmond Dispatch remarked, "This is true eloquence, coming from the heart of a man who not only sees what he describes, but is himself a participant." The newspaper then made its own plea on behalf of the troops and concluded saying, "Men and women of the South, to the cause, to the rescue!"⁸¹ In an editorial accompanying Alexander's letter, the Atlanta Southern Banner declared, "Our army must be clothed, and everyone of us who remains at home must assist in the good work. . . . Remember it is for your sons and brothers, and that necessity as well as patriotism demands that you act."⁸² By the following month, Alexander was able to report that thousands of pairs of shoes and dollars in cash had been donated to the army.⁸³

Alexander was not the only correspondent reporting on the problem of shortages within the army. The Times Courier's Winnell reported that during the invasion of Maryland, Unionists in the state had sold fur of the army's uniforms. The standard reply from the soldiers to such

⁸¹Richmond Dispatch, 9 October 1863, 2.

⁸²"Commence the Good work Now!" Atlanta Southern Banner, 3 October 1863, 1. For a similar editorial, see "Army Supplies Again," Augusta Constitutionalist, 4 October 1863, 1.

⁸³Mobile Advertiser & Register, 29 November 1863, 1.

comments was, "When we go to kill hogs we always put on our old clothes."⁸¹ In his next letter, the editor reported that new clothing for the army was arriving but very slowly. The clothing apparently was not enough because in November he reported that several officers had set off for Georgia hoping to secure winter clothing for the regiment. Davisall implored civilians to help.⁸²

Meanwhile, major changes were taking place at the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, changes that would become more evident as the war dropped on. William S. Jones announced he was selling the newspaper to W.S. Morse. Born in Connecticut, Morse had moved to Georgia several years before the war and had become ardently pro-Southern.⁸³ Morse said he would make the Chronicle & Sentinel "an independent conservative newspaper. We shall advocate to the best of our ability whatever we conceive may be for the best interest of the Confederacy, and of the State with whose fate our own is indissolubly connected."⁸⁴ The Constitutionalist welcomed the new owner, reminding his troubles in the North "Few can know better than he what an

⁸¹"Editorial Correspondence," Rose Courier, 4 November 1863, 3.

⁸²"Editorial Correspondence," Rose Courier, 4 November 1863, 3.

⁸³Frankley, Georgia Journalism, 27.

⁸⁴"To the Readers of the Chronicle & Sentinel," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 11 November 1863, 1.

intolerant and hideous despotism the South is struggling to escape."²⁸

The Battle of Fredericksburg

In November, an otherwise unidentified correspondent going by the pen name "Clio" began reporting from Richmond for the Atlanta Daily Intelligence.²⁹ In one of his early letters, he pointed out a problem that was becoming increasingly evident to many people in the North--that good generals were hard to find. During the first eighteen months of the war, President Lincoln had been unable to find a commander of the Army of the Potomac who would consistently take on and defeat Confederate forces. Although McClellan had driven Lee's army out of Maryland, the victory was not nearly as smashing as it could have been. And for the past month, McClellan had refused to resume the fight in Virginia. Saying that McClellan "has got the shins," Lincoln relieved the general of his command on November 7.³⁰ McFowell, Pope, McClellan, and others. "Clio" wrote, "have as of yet accomplished, comparatively speaking, little or nothing."³¹ The Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel said it was

²⁸"the Chronicle and Sentinel--Change in Proprietorship," Augusta Constitutionalist, 4 November 1862, 2.

²⁹"Clio's." Identity was never revealed.

³⁰T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and His Generals (New York: Knopf, 1962), 144-147.

³¹"from Richmond," Atlanta Daily Intelligence, 18 November 1862, 2.

sorry to see McClellan go. "The North may have better generals . . . but it would be hard to find a worse anywhere. . . . Our generals always counted confidently on McClellan's lack of enterprise and laid their plans accordingly."⁸² About the same time, Melville Driscoll's regiment broke camp near the Rappahannock and began the march towards Maryland. With no real amount of success, the Boston Commonwealth editor reported that the Confederate army was expertly evading the "grand debut" of the latest commander of the Army of the Potomac, Ambrose Burnside.⁸³

Back in Richmond, the Seventeenth Republican's Peter W. Alexander wrote a glowing profile of General Lee, who, since his victory at Second Manassas earlier in the year, had been hailed as a great hero. A man of imposing appearance, Alexander wrote, Lee did not care for the trappings of rank, being content "to take the same fare his soldiers get." Although not blessed with the greatest intellect, Lee nevertheless had "those qualities which are indispensable in the great leader and champion." Alexander concluded that Lee was "the peer of any living chieftains in the New World or the Old."⁸⁴

⁸²"McClellan's Removal," Commonwealth Chronicle & Sentinel, 25 November 1862, 2.

⁸³"Editorial Correspondence," Commonwealth, 4 December 1862, 2.

⁸⁴Mobile Advertiser & Register, 5 December 1862.

The portrayal of Lee as a masterful general proved to be correct later in December at the battle of Fredericksburg, one of the worst Union defeats of the war. Burnside sent his courageous troops against heavily entrenched Confederates on a hilltop.¹⁸ As a result, the Federals lost 13,000 men compared to only 5,000 Southern troops.¹⁹ Alexander's growing skill as a battlefield reporter could be seen in his account of the fighting, which proved to be one of his best of the war. Although Alexander did not reach Fredericksburg until the battle was over, his use of second-hand information and his own observations made for an outstanding story. Early in his report, he set the scene of the fighting, describing the hills, woods, and plains around Fredericksburg in precise detail. The Union army, Alexander wrote, faced artillery that "poured a devouring fire unto the ranks. . . . Assault upon assault was made, each time with fresh columns and increasing numbers. They never succeeded, however. . . ."

The result of such savage fighting was a scene horrifying even for a war-hardened reporter. Alexander wrote, "I went over the ground this morning and the remaining dead, after two-thirds of them had been removed, lay twice as thick as upon any other battlefield I have ever seen." Alexander's eye for detail shined in his vivid

¹⁸Matheson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 344-379.

description of a plank fence and stone walls behind which soldiers sought shelter:

Some of the planks in this fence were literally shot away from the posts to which they were nailed, and one can hardly place his hand upon any part of these without covering a dozen bullet holes. Just at the foot of the stone wall behind which our men were posted, thousands of flattened metal balls may be picked up, whilst the hills behind us have been almost converted into a lead mine.

The correspondent went on to describe the destruction that took place in Fredericksburg by Federal troops who had looted the town the day before.

There is hardly a structure in the place, however small that does not bear some of the marks of the conflict that raged through its streets and around its suburbs. . . . The floors in some of the houses were covered with the blood of their wounded and in some instances their dead still lay in the silent chambers, their bodies open staring wildly at the bare and blackened walls.¹⁴

The Athens Daily Intelligence printed an excellent letter about the battle from Major J.H. Reed, an officer in the 15th Georgia Regiment, to his father. Reed described shelling as heavy that it was as if "the very fires of hell had broken loose and were raining around us." Then the Federal infantry moved forward across a wide plain "marching with all the precision and accuracy of a parade." His regiment recovered enough from the shelling to pour murderous fire into the Federal troops. He went on:

They promptly returned the fire and at the same time their batteries re-opened upon us. For one half-hour the roar of musketry was incessant and unprecedentedly heavy. I never saw braver men than stood opposed to us

¹⁴ Mobile Advertiser & Register, 28 December 1863.

that day. He rejoices a soldier to see such courage and discipline though in an enemy.

Wool was struck by bullets in the arm and side, but the wounds were not serious. He also told his father that his unit had four bullet holes in it and his pants had two holes.⁸¹

Editor Sewall's brigade also was at Fredericksburg, but saw only limited fighting. As a result, his letters to the New Englander provided an incomplete picture of the battle. Sewall also was struck by the mass destruction of the town. He said he saw only three buildings in the entire town that had not been hit by cannon fire. Still, Sewall did not hesitate to proclaim Fredericksburg a "great victory."⁸² It had been a busy year for the fighting writer. He had seen action at most of the major battles in Virginia. And he had sent more than one hundred and fifty pieces of correspondence back to his paper.

Georgia lost one of its best-known figures at Fredericksburg when Thomas R.R. Cobb died. Cobb, one of the state's most ardent secessionists, had joined the army early in the war and commanded his own regiment. His death was a particular loss to his hometown of Athens, the city's newspaper said. "We have never before seen such deep and

⁸¹"Battle of Fredericksburg," ATLANTA DAILY INTELLIGENCER, 24 December 1862, 2.

⁸²"Army Correspondence," NEW ENGLANDER, 20 December 1862, 2.

universal sadness settle upon our town," said the Southern Banner. "His loss to the State and the Confederacy is great, but to Athens it is irreparable"¹⁷⁹ The Southern Watchman declared, "Among the long list of martyrs who have fallen in the cause of Southern independence, the name of THOMAS M. COBB will shine conspicuously on the pages of history."¹⁸⁰

Yet such losses did not keep Georgia's press from reveling in the victory at Fredericksburg. The Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel said the victory would be a big morale boost for the Confederacy. "When soldiers can fight under such circumstances as ours have--deprived by the want of sufficient food and clothing--when men can submit to discipline and privation without a murmur, the fire of true patriotism glows in their hearts, and a spirit which no enemy, however superior in numbers can quell," the newspaper said in an editorial.¹⁸¹ The Columbus Enquirer sounded a similar note and noted that Burnside had gone "the way of all great Yankee generals."¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹—"Death of Gen. T.M.C. Cobb," Athens Southern Banner, 17 December 1843, 3.

¹⁸⁰—"Death of Gen. T.M.C. Cobb," Athens Southern Watchman, 17 December 1843, 3.

¹⁸¹—"The Late Victories," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 23 December 1843, 3.

¹⁸²—"The Charge of Mass Confirmed," Columbus Enquirer, 23 December 1843, 3.

concluding

Despite major losses during the year, 1862 had ended triumphantly for the South. Georgia editors gladly seized on the good news from Fredericksburg to boost morale, that of their readers as well as their own. Although the state's correspondents had provided much fine work, it had been a difficult year for the state's newspapers in many other respects. Some newspapers had closed, some forever. Others struggled to publish in a diminished size and with a smaller staff. Editors had sobered to the fact that war meant suffering--for everyone.

CHAPTER 5
"OUR SITUATION IS NOT NEARLY SO DARK"

Summary

On the first day of the new year, the Milledgeville Confederate Union published a stark reminder of the toll the war already had taken on Georgia. On the newspaper's front page, the editors listed the names of eight prominent Georgians who had signed the state's ordinance of secession and been killed during the first two years of fighting. There was no editorial comment accompanying the list, but the underlying message was clear: Georgia was paying a terrible price to gain independence for the South.

The price would grow higher in the coming year. On the battlefield, the South suffered two of its most serious defeats of the war at Vicksburg and Gettysburg. Later in the year, the first major battle fought on Georgia soil took place at Chickasawga. Although it was a Confederate victory, a costly defeat two months later at Chattanooga, Tennessee left the Union army poised to strike Georgia. The state's correspondents did perhaps their finest work of the war in 1863, giving readers excellent accounts of all four battles as well as providing glimpses of the home side of war. At the same time, the growing respect correspondents showed for Federal troops and the increasingly desperate

tone of many editorials were clear indications of how badly the war was going for the South.

Spring Campaigns

Confederate leaders anticipated military activity on three main fronts in 1863. Since September, Union forces under the command of General Ulysses S. Grant had threatened Vicksburg, the last major Southern strong point on the Mississippi River. Confederate troops defending the city were led by General John C. Pemberton. In Tennessee, General Breckinridge's Confederates faced off against Federal troops led by General William G. Rosecrans. And in the east, General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia spent the winter near Fredericksburg, Virginia, awaiting an anticipated attack from Union forces under the command of General Joseph Hooker.

During the winter of 1863 the most concentrated activity was taking place at Vicksburg. Georgia newspapers were calling the river port, nestled on a chain of hills overlooking a sharp bend in the Mississippi, the "Gibraltar of the West" because it was considered impregnable. Union forces had made two attempts to capture Vicksburg, first by siege and later by assault, but both had failed. But the fighting nonetheless was taking its toll on the city.¹

¹John F. Walker, *Vicksburg: A People at War, 1862-1863* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 73-100.

"Vicksburg never was a prepossessing place," a correspondent for the *Columbus Jay* wrote in a letter to the newspaper published in January. The city still showed signs of the bombardment by the Union fleet the previous summer. Gaping holes could be seen in many of the homes, churches, and public buildings. Vicksburg also was threatened by a smallpox epidemic that had already killed a number of civilians. But the correspondent seemed most concerned about the exorbitant prices being charged by the city's merchants. The cost and poor quality at one restaurant left him feeling especially cheated.

[Strutting around in this Mississippi and makes one as hungry as a wolf. . . . These great golden lattices show that door--restaurant--hall of good things within that make a soldier think of home. . . . The smiling individual who meets you at the door evidently overthinks his business. Dinner for one? Yes, sir, what will you have? What have you got? Coffee, dear. His--this is always mentioned first, for everybody likes real his--beef, mutton, pork, potatoes, butter and bread. A hungry man eats everything with pleasure, but this coffee certainly has a strong smell of villainous rye; and the bread is poor enough to have fasted over home if left the verdant plains of Texas; and the butter smells as if had made a trip from Texas too, or had even run the blockade from some foreign country across the deep blue sea. There is, however, no use in grumbling about what one has eaten, and, after all, this dinner is so much better than camp fare, that you feel good and pull out your pocket book with the air of a man who has been benefited and wished to compensate his benefactor. What do I owe you, sir? Two dollars and a half. Two dollars and a half! You are sure-- And before you can finish the sentence your accommodating host begins talking in such an excited manner about paying forty cents a pound for flour, fifty cents for pork, three dollars for butter, five dollars for coffee, such much for wood, house rent &c so that you feel assured what you have said, anything and are glad to beat a hasty retreat. . . .]

¹*Columbus Daily Sun*, 17 February 1863, 3.

"Amos," a correspondent for the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, expressed concern in one of his letters at how the poor of Vicksburg were able to survive with such high prices. Meanwhile, Confederate troops were watching Federal forces in anticipation of their next move against the city. Since Union troops could be clearly seen with the naked eye, "everybody is allowed the privilege of a good look," he wrote. Perhaps concerned that his words would be seen as showing concern over the situation, the correspondent added, "Curiosity, and not fear, is the controlling consideration. The idea is entertained that the enemy will soon succeed in taking this place."²

By the end of April, "Amos" reported that Vicksburg was "being shelled from one end to the other" but the city by and large had become indifferent to the constant attacks. Citizens continued to walk the streets and businesses remained opened. Amos described an old man who sat on his front porch while shells flew overhead. The man never moved. One benefit of the shelling was the lucrative market for spent shells, Amos reported. People traveling through the city liked to take the shells home as souvenirs and were

²"Day Army Correspondence," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 17 March 1863, 3. "Amos's" identity was never revealed. He continued sending dispatches to the Chronicle & Sentinel from Vicksburg until May when his letters stopped appearing. He did not report for the newspaper again for the rest of the war.

willing to pay as much as two dollars and a half for them. As a result, the shells "hardly touch the ground before someone picks them up," he wrote.¹

Other News

From the earliest days of Georgia's secession and the Confederacy's life, editors recognized that the activities of the state and national governments deserved coverage. In terms of the amount of space given to it, government reporting ranked second behind coverage of the war. Throughout the war, Georgia newspapers had reported on the twice-annual meetings of the state legislature. Editors of the state's dailies, and larger weeklies, such as George W. Allen of the Atlanta Southern Confederacy or Jesse L. Sledge of the Athens Athenian Evening, covered the legislative sessions, while the smaller weeklies relied on exchanges. Most of the coverage from the legislative sessions consisted of dry, factual reporting written in the manner of a recording secretary, a practice started by most newspapers earlier in the century and which continued through the war years. Sometimes stories were little more than lists of the action taken by the legislature such as:

A bill to confer certain powers on the city Council of Augusta. Passed.

A bill to change the lines between Cobb and Paulding Counties. Passed.

¹"Our Army Correspondence," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 8 May 1863, 1.

A bill to incorporate the Cotton Planters Bank of the Confederate States. Last.

Once the war began, the state's newspapers devoted far less attention to the Confederate government. Several of the state's major dailies used correspondents in Richmond at various times during the war. They sent lengthy letters back to their newspapers two or three times a week summarizing and highlighting major activities of the Confederate government. Most newspapers in the state, however, depended on the Press Association and their exchanges, especially the Richmond dailies, for news from the capital.

During slow news periods, editors confronted the age-old problem of finding other items to fill up their news columns. In February the editor of the *Atlanta Southern Confederacy* related the story of meeting a group of men on the street describing the difficulties of their occupations. The editor listened as the four men—a railroad agent, tailor, slave dealer, and clerk—told their tales of woe. The editor then described for readers a typical day in his newspaper office:

As we enter our office in the morning, the confidential clerk, who opens our letters, hands us a short communication, quietly remarking that "these fellows at Harrods have run upon in the price of their paper." We hastily glance at the contents and find that the paper mills have made a heavy advance upon us. We indignantly pass on to the press-room and find a good

¹"Mississippi Correspondence," *Atlanta Daily Intelligence* 19 November 1861, 3.

portion of the floor flooded with water. We ask Billy what is the matter and he replies, "Nothing but a ship is one of the fires and engine boiled over." We then ask Billy how there came to be so many waste papers. . . . "Well," says he, "the last paper you got at Karietta ain't no account. About a fifth of it is split up, so it won't run through." We start back, and the walling clock accosts us saying, "Don't waste without fire such a morning as this." We call the porter and ask why a good fire is not made, what he replies that he can't make it burn, as the last load of coal is nearly all rocks. . . .

We stop to the front door a moment, to catch the fresh air, while we try to arrive at a solution of the problem, just named, when a little negro comes dashing up and says, "Mister wants a paper; Masley flinged him over de fence in de yard and de puppy bared at up." Just then a red-faced man, with a dilapidated military coat on, steps up and inquires who is the man who wants to go as a substitute? We tell him to walk into the office and the clerk will give him the name. . . .

While we are finishing this last remark, an old friend of ours from the country approaches and say, "I believe I will take your paper this year, if you hadn't rise on it." We tell him our Weekly is greatly enlarged and is only \$4 a year, and that a basket of yams and a dozen eggs will bring him money enough to pay for it; that heretofore he had paid \$2 a year for our paper, and only got 50 cents for the yams and 10 cents for the eggs which will now bring him \$3. "Well," says he, "I'll try it for six months anyhow". . . .

After an hour spent in this way, we hurry up to our sanctum to look over exchanges and correspondents; but find few papers and none from Richmond, Charleston or Mobile; find one or two letters from men we never knew or heard of before, asking us to change their papers to some Post office, without stating where they are not taking it, as though we had plenty of time to look through all those "eight ponderous volumes" to find the name. . . .

We have not more than got ourselves well squared up to our desk to fix something for the paper, when our barman comes in hurriedly saying "Boss, sir." We have gone ready, and have to give him something that is only half ready, or something that we could not put in the paper, if we had anything else prepared; but the printer can't wait, and must have something to work on.

We impatiently turn to our desk and have not more than got ourselves composed and our mind in proper train of thought on (what we considered) an important editorial when we hear three quick, light, but distinct raps at the door. We at once know that is a woman. We say

"come in," when the visitor introduces herself, gives the most satisfactory references of unsurpassed talents and accomplishments, and wants to engage to furnish us with a six column article on 1874, or the education of women, and a piece of poetry twice a week, dedicated to all the distinguished and handsome Generals of the war, our handsome pay, of course. We are compelled, through politeness to a lady—a literary lady—and the genuine blue-stocking aristocracy, to sit for half an hour and talk, and hear her talk, the most elaborate nonsense. . . .

We then start out upon the street to transact some very important business that should have been attended several days ago. We meet three men at the door as we enter the street, each of whom, in his turn, asks us a question in the following order:

"Get any dispatches since morning?"—"Any news from Vicksburg and will the Yankees take Wilmington?"

"Do you think Congress will repeal the exemption act?" "I believe I'll look round for a wife; we'll all have to go yet". . . .

Soon after dinner persons commence coming in and asking "Reading paper out yet?" "No sir," we reply. "What time will it be out?" "Five o'clock," we again reply; and these questions are asked and the same answer given with few variations a hundred times a day. Occasionally one will give a little variety by saying he can't walk, and then ask if we have "anything good in the paper to day."

These are not half our daily troubles, and the most serious and important of them are not alluded to in this article. . . .

During slow news days, editors also printed jokes and other bits of humor to fill up their columns. Not surprisingly, the humor often came at the expense of the South and the Federal army. The Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, for example, printed what it described as even questions answered by students at West Point. Among the questions and answers were:

⁴"The Complaining World," *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, 1 February 1861, 1.

Professor: Now would you perform a "grand strategic movement?"

Cadet: Pull back in good order, leaving behind my killed and wounded, guns and camp equipment to retard the movement of the enemy.

Professor: Now would you "change the base" of your operations?

Cadet: Spike my cannon, throw away guns and knapsacks, burn up the baggage wagon and scudaddle immediately, or swim, if possible.

Other editors found humor in their own situations.

An editor with the *Columbus Enquirer*, who was a member of the local militia, described a night he spent on guard duty at the government granary. The night was quiet, he reported, with the only activity coming from rats "committing great depredations." But since he had not been furnished with any ammunition, there was nothing he could do about them. He concluded his account of the night writing,

We fear that our night's vigil was an unprofitable one to the service, and would suggest that the next sentinel sent to the granary be accompanied by a mischief-loving ten year old boy and two or three smart terriers. They could do a great deal more good there than a dull "old fogey" like myself, and we are not very sure that they might not be profitably employed in detecting our rats preying upon the Government in other quarters of the city--rats invade if not in corn.¹

Editors could find no humor, however, in the increasing problems they faced simply trying to get their newspapers out. An especially damaging blow came in April when the sixth paper mill in North Carolina, six miles from Augusta, was destroyed by a fire. At the time, it was the largest

¹"Military Examination," *Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel*, 9 September 1862, 3.

²"Our Report," *Columbus Enquirer*, 9 November 1861, 3.

paper mill in the Confederacy. The impact was felt almost immediately by Georgia's newspapers. The next week, the Atlanta Southern Exchange announced the price of paper had jumped three dollars a ream. The same week most newspapers began printing as half-sheets. The Augusta Constitutionalist also announced it was suspending publication of its afternoon edition and said it would not accept any new subscriptions. The Columbus Enquirer did likewise. At the same time, virtually every newspaper publicly appealed for readers to save their old rags for purchase at the newspaper office.⁹

The state's editors also were taking steps to improve the South's cooperative news-gathering. Continued dissatisfaction with the service provided by William H. Fritchard Jr.'s Southern Associated Press led to renewed activity to find a more satisfactory solution. At the urging of the Macon Daily Telegraph's editor, Joseph Gandy, editors of the news of the Confederacy's leading dailies met in Macon in January 1863. Their work culminated in the establishment of the Press Association of the Confederate States of America on March 1, 1863. The association, comprising all Confederate dailies and a few tri-weeklies, selected John H. Thresher as general manager.¹⁰

⁹"Rath Paper Mill Destroyed," Augusta Constitutionalist, 3 April 1863, 3.

¹⁰Quintus C. Wilson, "Confederate Press Association: A Pioneer News Agency" Journalism Quarterly, 38 (1960): 188.

After establishing the association's headquarters in Atlanta, Thrasher traveled around the South securing reporters with the the principal armies in the field and at the major news centers. He also made arrangements with the telegraphic companies in the South to transmit the association's press dispatches. Thrasher instructed his correspondents that they represented the "whole daily press" of the Confederacy and that they should demand "early intelligence" of military activity. Reporters were told to keep their stories objective and to discriminate between fact and rumor. At the same time, Thrasher said, all reports should be written so as to be sure they passed inspection by Confederate censors.¹¹

Correspondents for the P.A., as it was sometimes called, were paid twenty-five dollars a week, plus a modest allowance for travel. They were allowed to supplement their income by providing special reports to individual newspapers. Each member of the Press Association received a weekly news report not to exceed 1,500 words at a flat rate of twelve dollars. For any stories longer than 1,500 words, members had to pay a rate of ten cents a word. By the end of 1862, Thrasher reported that the Press Association had

106; J. Carter Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1932), 34-35.

¹¹Wells, "Confederate Press Association," 281-282.

sent more than 150,000 words to members over the telegraph.¹²

A sign of the difficult economic times was evident at the annual convention of the editors and publishers of Georgia's weekly newspapers held in April. To keep up with the increased cost of paper and materials, members voted to raise the annual subscription rate of weeklies to four dollars per year. Representatives of only seven weeklies were present, however. Elsewhere, the *News Southerner* was put up for sale by its owner. In March, Dr. L.P.W. Andrews, former editor of the defunct *News Citizen*, chose to ignore the problems facing many newspapers in the state and began publishing the *Daily Confederate* on February 8.¹³ The *Confederate's* editor was Henry L. Flash, a poet and former editor with the *Mobile Register*, who had served as a captain on the staffs of generals William J. Hardee and Joseph Wheeler. Flash later purchased the *Confederate* from Andrews, although the exact date of the purchase is not known.¹⁴ During the same month, the *Atlanta Commonwealth* began publishing again after a brief suspension.¹⁵

¹²Wilson, "Confederate Press Association," 188.

¹³Robert Lee Arantley, *Georgia Journalism of the Civil War Period* (Nashville, Tenn.: George Peabody College, 1938), 52.

¹⁴William Herbert Wilson, "In the Telegraph See It: A Study of the Editorial Policy of the *News Daily Telegraph* (and *Confederate*)" (MA thesis, Emory University, 1964), 18-22.

Forester Precluded a Siege

By April the pace of fighting in the East had picked up. In Georgia, Union forces made another attempt to disrupt traffic on the Western and Atlantic Railroad in the southwest part of the state. That month Colonel Abel G. Straight and 1,000 Federal cavalry were ordered to sever the line south of Dalton, Georgia to prevent reinforcement of General Braxton Bragg's Confederate army in Tennessee. On April 16 Straight's forces left Alabama and headed up the Coosa River toward Rome, Georgia. Word of the threat reached Rome and recruitment soldiers and citizens in the city quickly organized a militia. When Straight sent a band of cavalry to seize the bridge over the Coosa at Rome, the militia made such a show of resistance that the Federal cavalry was led to believe the city's defense was formidable. Straight's force retreated without attempting to take the bridge. In the meantime, General Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry had been dispatched to intercept the Federal troops. After several days, Forrest's six hundred cavalry eventually came upon Straight's cavalry near Cedar Bluff, Alabama. Pretending to communicate with a non-

¹⁸ The *Commonwealth* was an evening paper that had been founded before the war and published until the capture of the city in 1864. Apparently, no copies of the paper survived the war. One historian of Atlanta has written that "the *Commonwealth* favored its readers with an endless variety of paper. Book paper, pure white news, straw colored, muslin, common brown wrapping paper, and even wall paper were all used by turns in its later editions." *Snodgrass, Georgia Journalism*, 33.

existent force, Forrest decided to wait on the strength of the Confederate cavalry. On May 1, Straight surrendered his entire command of 1,400 men and a large stock of supplies.¹⁴

The Savannah Courier carried a lengthy account of the raid focusing on the efforts of Savannah citizens to protect their city. The newspaper also reported on the joyful reception given to Forrest and a portion of his cavalry who brought the captured Federal officers to Savannah late on the afternoon of May 1. "Such a jubilee, Savannah has never experienced," the newspaper declared.¹⁵ The Atlanta newspapers carried accounts of the raid and capture for several days in a row. The Southern Confederacy's editor, George W. Adair, could claim an exclusive when he managed to get an interview with General Forrest who described the capture in some detail. The story filled four columns on the front page, making it one of the longest accounts published during the war.¹⁶

Georgia newspapers seized upon the incident as proof that stronger home defenses were needed in their communities. The Columbus Inquirer urged citizens to organize a home guard saying, "It may be thought by some that Columbus is in

¹⁴W. Ross Bryson, Confederate Georgia, (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1953), 31-32.

¹⁵"great victory! great joy!" Savannah Courier, 2 May 1862, 2.

¹⁶Adair was a friend of General Forrest and no doubt used the acquaintance to secure the interview. In 1861 Adair joined the general's staff as an aide.

no danger. So wary though of Rome. . . ."¹⁷ In an editorial, the Southern Confederacy said the raid was evidence that the Federals had decided to change tactics and emphasize cavalry raids intended to disrupt transportation, manufacturing, and government stores. It went on to ask:

Men of the South, shall it be done? We ask all men--the men of this community--the old men, grizzled men, exempt, men who have put in substitutes, boys and all, what is our duty? . . . We say organize into companies at once! Let every man be enrolled and know where he can put his hand on a gun and ammunition, and know where to report and fall into line.¹⁸

During the spring, Virginia also was the scene of renewed fighting. In late April, Hooker's Army of the Potomac crossed the Rappahannock and marched down the river's southern bank toward Lee's army at Fredericksburg. Lee recognized the threat and took the bulk of his army to meet Hooker. The two armies collided at a crossroads community called Chancellorsville. The Federal army outnumbered Confederate troops almost two to one, but the densely wooded terrain reduced the effect of the numbers. More importantly, the Confederates discovered that one of the Union flanks was unsecured. In the week during which he had ever taken, Lee sent Stonewall Jackson with 18,000 troops on a roundabout march to attack the exposed flank, while Lee remained with only 15,000 men to face the bulk of

¹⁷"Organize for Home Defense," Columbus Enquirer, 18 May 1863, 2.

¹⁸"The War Progresses Changed," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 18 May 1863, 2.

Hacker's army. Heavy fighting took place May 2-4, with the Confederates eventually forcing Hacker's army back across the Rapahannock. With half as many troops, the Confederate commander once again had outmaneuvered the Federal army. Still, it was not the complete victory Lee had hoped for.²⁰

No correspondents from Georgia were on hand to report the battle. In fact, Chancellorsville was one of the most poorly reported battles of the entire war from the Confederate perspective. The Confederate Press Association accounts drew heavily from the news columns of the Richmond newspapers which, in turn, had taken much of their information from the Northern press.²¹ The editor of the Augusta Constitutionalist used his news columns to express his outrage at the "ridiculously and pitifully false accounts" of the battle that he received from the Press Association and refused to print them in his newspaper.²² Peter W. Alexander and Samuel Chester Reid, who had begun reporting for the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, published accounts of the battle several weeks later. But both were

²⁰James L. Huffman, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era (New York: Foliovision Books, 1988), 418-428.

²¹Andrew, The South Reports the Civil War, 298.

²²Augusta Constitutionalist, 18 May 1863, 2. The editor of the Savannah Republican complained that during a period of three weeks after the battle, "We have not seen the columns of a single Georgia Regiment in a Virginia paper." Savannah Republican, 18 May 1863, 2.

down from second-hand accounts and provided little insight into the battle.¹⁴

Chancellorsville also came at a heavy price for the Confederacy. In the confusion of fighting during the evening of May 3, Stonewall Jackson and several of his officers had ridden in front of a Confederate regiment that was expecting an attack. Suspecting the group was Union cavalry, Confederate soldiers fired at them and Jackson was hit by two bullets in the arm. Although the arm was amputated, pneumonia set in. Eight days later, one of the South's greatest generals had died.¹⁵

Jackson's death caused an outpouring of grief by the press. Most of the state's dailies and weeklies published editorial tributes, many surrounded by thin black rule. The *Columbus Enquirer* called his death "the most lamentable individual casualty of the war."¹⁶ The *Augusta Constitutionalist* said of Jackson, "his name was as terrible to the enemy as it was inspiring to his followers. . . ."¹⁷ And the *Atlanta Intelligencer* declared, "The news of his death has cast a gloom over this community, as indeed it

¹⁴*Augusta Republic*, 3 June 1863; *Atlanta Daily Intelligencer*, 18 May 1863, 2.

¹⁵McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 342.

¹⁶"The Death of Gen. Jackson," *Columbus Enquirer*, 18 May 1863, 2.

¹⁷"Death of Gen. T.G. Jackson," *Daily Constitutionalist*, 18 May 1863, 2.

will cover the whole land. The idol of the people and his army, his enemy will ever be destroyed. Truly a great man has fallen!"¹⁸

Vicksburg Surrenders

The fighting continued in Vicksburg throughout the early months of the year. By the spring, Grant's plans for a campaign against the city had changed, and he had decided to strike at Vicksburg from the south. On May 1 Grant's troops met Confederate forces at Port Gibson, Mississippi. After an all-day fight, Southern troops were forced to retreat toward Vicksburg.¹⁹ The Augusta Constitutionalist's correspondent "Mercurius" did not witness the battle, but using second-hand accounts, he described the retreat by Confederate troops, who were accompanied by residents of Port Gibson including pale women, wheezing children, and a few faithful slaves. "Mercurius" acknowledged that the defeat had been a major setback for Confederate forces. Still, he declared Vicksburg "invulnerable against all, but starvation."²⁰

With Vicksburg becoming increasingly threatened, Georgia editors seized upon any good information coming out

¹⁸"The Death of General F. J. Jackson," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 12 May 1863, 2.

¹⁹Shelby Foote, The Civil War, A Narrative: Fredericksburg to Vicksburg (New York: Random House, 1974), 345-346.

²⁰Augusta Constitutionalist, 16 May 1863, 2.

of Mississippi is worth to comment. After the battle of Baker's Creek there were grossly and uncorroborated reports in the Confederate press that Union commanders had ordered the burning of tax and other materials to save their troops from the stench of the Yankee dead who were rotting in front of Confederate earthworks. Noting that the Federals were asking of their dead "to stink our foes out of their stronghold from which their valor had failed to drive us," the editor of the Southern Confederacy sarcastically and tactlessly remarked that this represented "a new kind of strategy—a new offensive weapon of warfare not laid down in any of the authorities in military science."²¹

As was the case with most of the Confederate press, Georgia newspapers without correspondents at Vicksburg had to depend on the Confederate Press Association in Jackson, Mississippi, for information about the situation at Vicksburg. To reduce the cost of telegraphic news reporting, the general manager of the Press Association instructed the agents to exclude prepositions, conjunctions, and other excess wrappings from their dispatches.²² The result were stories often incomprehensible to editors back home. The Savannah Morning News published an example of the Press Association's telegraphic dispatch from Jackson:

Eight boats passed Vicksburg last night; one burnt two disabled five succeeded. Union Genl. Miller's dead

²¹Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 19 May 1863, 2.

²²Andrews, The South Reports the Civil War, 324-325.

reach Mississippi near New Carthage believed construction batteries opposite Vicksburg. Jew paid Burn Bridge Big Black Vicksburg attacked within ten to days all officers absent ordered report opposite Vicksburg sixty-four 44 steamers left Memphis for Vicksburg soldiers shipped on papers allowed below Cairo Barkers Conflicting Boats 88 north Memphis Bulletin argue suppressed editors arrested.³¹

Starting in May, many of Georgia's largest papers carried almost daily telegraphic news from Vicksburg. Georgia correspondents also supplemented these news accounts. Correspondent "W" of the *State Courier*, who was part of the Cherokee Artillery at Vicksburg, said Confederate troops were fighting bravely, but admitted that "we have a brave and determined foe to contend with."³²

Mississippi is the state's newspapers alternated between expressing confidence and doubt that Vicksburg could be defended successfully. "The popular anxiety about Vicksburg is becoming painful, and is intensifying daily," admitted the *Columbus Enquirer*.³³ An editorial in the *Atlanta Southern Confederacy* asked the question, "Can Vicksburg be saved?" adding, "This is the absorbing question of the hour. It is on every man's lips and uppermost on every man's mind."³⁴

³¹*Memphis Morning News*, 18 April 1863, 2.

³²"From the Cherokee Artillery," *State Courier*, 18 May 1863, 2.

³³"Vicksburg," *Columbus Enquirer*, 23 June 1863, 2.

³⁴"From the Cherokee Artillery," *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, 17 May 1863, 2.

The answer ultimately was no. On July 4, Confederate forces in Vicksburg, which had been under siege for weeks, surrendered to Grant. The North had gained control of the Mississippi all the way to its mouth. After the surrender, some editors expressed anger at what they believed had been deceptive news reports coming from Mississippi. In an editorial, the Savannah Republican said bitterly,

[T]here is a heavy weight of responsibility resting on somebody's shoulders for the regular and systematic lying that has been put upon the public regarding the ability of this place to holdout. The western press in the vicinity of the unfortunate city have been quite as badly imposed on as anybody else. We have forty times read reports, coming from Pemberton himself, that supplies were abundant, and the garrisons would "hold out indefinitely" . . .

After the surrender, stories began to appear describing the conditions during the final days of the siege. A correspondent for the Augusta Constitutionalist reported that during the siege in some places Federal lines were within ten feet of the Confederate trenches, "close enough to make scribbling on ship crackers and tossing them into our ditches a favorite amusement." Southern troops faced Federal batteries which fired "shells the size of a half a bushel filled with powder . . . born in an instant from that red hell beyond the trees." The correspondent also described the toll the siege had taken on Confederate troops who were forced to eat anything they could get their hands on.

¹⁷Savannah Republican, 10 July 1863, 3.

(Bisque are a luxury. Small fishes sell at twenty dollars. Chickens at ten dollars each. Corn meal has sold at one hundred and sixty dollars per bushel. Male meat has sold readily at two dollars per pound, in market, and I eat it once a week. The soldiers have had only one meal a day for two days, and they are not even getting what a child should have. . . .

Georgia's newspapers admitted the surrender of Vicksburg was disastrous. But they quickly went about the business of trying to restore confidence. The *Bone Courier* said the defeat would energize Southerners who had become "too self-confident and were relying, perhaps, too much, upon Lee, Johnston and Gregg, and too little upon the army of God." It called upon people to "quit cracking and flinching fault . . . and turn to praying and fighting."³⁹ The *Atlanta Intelligencer* contended that the North had paid dearly for Vicksburg. It said the Confederate Army deserved praise for holding out as long as it did.⁴⁰ Also trying to put the best face on the disaster, the *Columbus Enquirer* argued that the North would find the Mississippi River to be of no practical use.⁴¹

³⁹*Savannah Constitutionalist*, 24 July 1863, 2.

⁴⁰"We came for discouragement," *Bone Courier*, 28 July 1863, 2.

⁴¹*Atlanta Daily Intelligencer*, 16 July 1863, 2.

⁴²*Columbus Enquirer*, 14 July 1863, 1. For more editorials on the loss of Vicksburg, "The Loss of Vicksburg," see *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, 9 July 1863, 2; "Our Loss in the Fall of Vicksburg," *Savannah Chronicle & Sentinel*, 14 July 1863, 2; and "Defend Your Home," *Savannah Constitutionalist*, 14 July 1863, 2.

The Battle of Gettysburg

As the operations at Vicksburg were drawing to a close, General Lee had decided to invade the North once again. After reorganizing his army into three corps, Lee started the first contingents of his army along the Rappahannock River to meet at Calverton, Virginia, for the march into Pennsylvania. By this time, the *Severnach Republican* had three correspondents attached to Lee's army: Peter W. Alexander and two soldier correspondents, "Capt. Parker" and a writer who went by the pen name "Trot-to-Bondo."⁴¹

Writing from Virginia in mid-June, Parker described leaving Calverton and marching twenty miles "under the hottest sun we have ever yet endured." Several soldiers died during the march from the intense heat, he reported. At the town of Upperville, he praised the hospitality shown to troops by the residents. They gave the weary men fresh-baked bread, milk, and butter while Negro servants stood at every gate offering water.⁴²

About the same time, Alexander was reporting a series of hard-fought engagements in Virginia between June 13 and 15 in which General Jeb Stuart's cavalry participated. The correspondent was critical of the cavalry's performance. He reported that Stuart's officers were "discouraged" and questioned Stuart's qualifications to command such a large group of men. The troopers, meanwhile, were "hardening on a

⁴²*Severnach Republican*, 18 June 1863, 1.

state of demoralisation." Alexander reported that the cavalry had come to be regarded with contempt by other parts of Lee's army. In his opinion, Alexander wrote, the dragoons need more discipline and stronger leadership.⁴² "F.V.A." insisted that "it gives me no great pleasure" to report such facts, adding "[t]here is no braver or gallantier spirit Stewart [sic]." He went on "As a colonel of cavalry he rendered important service at Mason's and Hanson's hills near Washington, and as Brigadier he displayed commendable spirit and energy; but the heavy force of his command is too large for him. . . ." Alexander's questions about Stewart's command would prove to be on the mark later at Gettysburg.⁴³

Parks was with John B. Hood's division in late June when it crossed the Potomac. Afterward, Hood stopped his troops for an hour and issued a ration of whiskey. Parks went on to write:

while I believe a too free use of the "ardent" is injurious particularly to the soldiers, I believe the troops were benefited this time; for all the previous night and until 3 o'clock that evening they were exposed to a cold, drizzling rain. Furthermore we had to wade the Potomac and were not allowed to strip. In thirty minutes after the whiskey was issued, Hood's division presented the liveliest spectacle I ever saw, most sober and with red faces, and it was difficult even to hear one's own talk.⁴⁴

⁴² *Memphis Republican*, 4 July 1863, 2.

⁴³ *Memphis Republican*, 4 July 1863, 2.

⁴⁴ *Memphis Republican*, 21 July 1863, 2.

The Republicans's correspondents also reported on the reception given to the Confederate army upon marching into Farmington. At Chambersburg, Parks said he had never seen so many long faces and that the expressions of some women "would have made vinegar ashamed of itself for sourness." Some citizens told the troops that they could expect to receive a good thrashing.⁴⁶ Alexander was contemptuous of the Farmingtonians, a somewhat surprising attitude in view of his usual fairness. The people he saw were "good farmers and laborers, but otherwise . . . a stupid set, but little superior to their sleek cattle and well-fed horses. They know nothing beyond their immediate neighborhood and fall far below the people of the Confederacy in spirit and intelligence."⁴⁷ A correspondent for the Southern Confederacy was more respectful, writing,

We . . . in vain looked for some development of that peace sentiment which we had been told existed here. . . . [T]he stern, mournful, determined countenances of the men showed that, although captives, the undaunted spirit that waged so cruel a war on us had not yet become broken or subservient.

At Chambersburg, the correspondent reported,

the whole population was at the windows or on the sidewalks to see us, and all breathed alike, in their quiet looks, the most unmitigated scorn and hatred to us. . . . Even women took handkerchiefs and waved them showing every evidence of their character and we could not help but notice the fire, unexpressed in which they upheld their accursed cause.

⁴⁶Chicago Republican, 4 July 1863, 2.

⁴⁷Massachusetts Republican, 4 July 1863, 2.

⁴⁸Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 14 July 1863, 2.

In late June, General George G. Meade replaced Hooker as commander of the Army of the Potomac. Meade moved his army to meet Lee's threat, and on July 1 elements of the two armies clashed outside the small town of Gettysburg. No Georgia correspondents could provide a first-hand account of the day's fighting.⁴⁹ By the end of the day when the bulk of both armies arrived, they found that Confederates held Gettysburg, but just outside the town the Federals were fortifying Cemetery Hill and the ridges extending along to two small hills known as Big Round Top and Little Round Top.

The next day, Lee ordered Longstreet's corps to attack the Round Tops and Richard S. Ewell's corps to extend the southern line around Cemetery Hill. Despite fierce fighting, neither army was able to dislodge the Federals from the heights. Republican correspondent "Foot-in-Mouth," who was attached to Wood's division, described the attack from the viewpoint of the command. As the Confederate troops made the gradual ascent across the wide field, they came under fire from Union artillery.

Down the plaining that came, hursting before and around and everywhere tearing up the ground in a terrific hail of death-- Still the old brigade moved on in its solid

⁴⁹Alexander and Parks were attached to Longstreet's corps which did not arrive at the battlefield until the next day. Alexander wrote about being near Chambersburg the evening of July 1. He was sitting on the ground propped up against a tree when he saw General Lee and his staff pass by in the direction of Gettysburg. *Warrenton Republican*, 22 July 1863, 2.

and beautiful line. . . . As it approached the gate, the rain of grape and cannon began, mingling their sharp cries with the shrill whistle of the mad wooden balls which seemed to come in showers. The ranks began to melt away, but springing forward with a shout the undisciplined line steadily rushed on, determined this time to sacrifice every life to carry the cannon-covered hill before them--

Tout-le-Monde went on to describe the ferocious fighting in the Devil's Den, a "jungle of boulders" near Little Round Top. He told how Confederate troops had climbed over the rocks and broken the Federal line. The fighting continued with Union troops trying to regain the lost ground--

The enemy forced his lines and swept down the hill to recapture his guns, but the steady fire of the old brigade swept him away and broke his ranks in every futile effort. Again and again he formed and desperately charged at the hill which contained his guns, but each time his ranks were broken and hurled back on the mountain heights. All the while the elements were blowing with violence. The shell and shrapnel shot descended, exploding in the earth and hurling the rocks to an amazing height, but in spite of all, we men held their places firmly.

A correspondent for the *Argosy Constitutional* described the fighting from the vantage point of Georgia troops who were attacking the Federal center as Cemetery Ridge.

As soon as we emerged from the woods and came into the open fields, the enemy poured a most terrific fire of shells into our ranks. We rushed down the hillside and reaching the valley found it was broken by a series of small ridges and hollows running parallel with the enemy's line on the mountain; and in the first of these depressions or hollows our line paused for breath. Then we rushed over the next ridge into the succeeding hollow, and thus we worked our way across that terrible field for more than a mile under the most furious fire of artillery I had ever seen. When we reached the base

¹² *Harvard American*, 22 July 1863, 3.

of the range upon which the enemy were posted, they opened upon us with their infantry, and raked our whole line with grape and canister from more than twenty guns.

The Georgians eventually found themselves pinned in with no support. To escape capture they had to turn around and fight their way out, the correspondent reported. When the brigade regrouped a half-mile to the rear, only 150 men were left of the 1,400 who had begun the attack.⁵¹

The fighting was even more fierce the next day when Lee decided to have a showdown and attacked Meade's center. In the same column, the Constitutionalist's correspondent described what would become known later as "Pickett's Charge."

Pickett pushed firmly and steadily forward, going over the idealistic ground our brigade had passed the day before. Pettigrew followed in fine order. Our artillery had not ceased firing, and upon inquiry, I learned they had exhausted their ammunition! And at such a time! There is Pickett and Pettigrew half across the valley; the enemy have run up new guns and are pouring a deadly fire into their ranks. The enemy's infantry have opened upon them--they fall as every soldier--Generals, Colonels, Captains, Lieutenants, privates as thick as autumn leaves they strew the plain. And our guns, will they not re-open? In their no mercy for those brave spirits who are so nobly and steadily bearing their country's flag in this terrible fight?⁵²

Pickett's charge was a gallant disaster. By the afternoon of July 3, the fighting at Gettysburg was over. The next day, both armies remained on the field facing one

⁵¹ Augusta Constitutionalist, 23 July 1863, 1.

⁵² Augusta Constitutionalist, 23 July 1863, 1.

another, but both were too tired and battle-weary to fight any more. The casualties from Gettysburg were staggering. Union losses totaled some 53,000 out of a force of 85,000 men. The Confederacy lost about the same number, but from an army of only 45,000 men. Among the Confederate dead was correspondent Parks of the Seventeenth Franklinian.⁸¹

The devastating news from Gettysburg did not reach most Georgians for a week or more after the battle. In the meantime, much confusion could be assumed for being confused. Several of the state's dailies initially declared Gettysburg a victory for the South. The Seventeenth Morning News, for example, carried a telegraphic dispatch on July 8, five days after the fighting had concluded, reporting that "the enemy has been completely routed." But the account provided no details.⁸² The Atlanta Daily Intelligencer claimed Parker's army had "been completely demolished" and that 45,000 Union troops had surrendered.⁸³ A story in the Morning News the following day said information from the battle was

⁸¹The circumstances of Parks' death are described in the Seventeenth Franklinian, 11 August 1863, 1. Editor Pinnett of the Evening Courier was shot in the arm at Gettysburg, as he described in a story for his paper. He was among the less seriously wounded who had to walk the ninety miles from Gettysburg to Winchester, Virginia, after the battle. Two weeks later, he returned to Rome "looking well, though somewhat thinner and paler than usual." Rome Courier, 31 July 1863, 2.

⁸²"Important from Lee's Army," Seventeenth Morning News, 8 July 1863, 2.

⁸³"Our Success," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 9 July 1863, 2.

incomplete, but that there had been heavy losses on both sides. An editor's note at the bottom of the story noted, "Like everything we receive of late, the above dispatch is very vague and unsatisfactory."¹⁶

Eventually news of Gettysburg began to emerge, thanks, in part, to the reporting of Georgia's correspondents. Alexander's report of the battle ran two full columns long on the front page of the Savannah Daily and jumped to one-half column on page two, making it one of his longest stories of the war. It was reprinted by many of the state's papers. The correspondent began his account wondrously as he wrote, "The bloodiest and most desperate battle of this bloody and most desperate war has just been fought here on the soil of Pennsylvania." The story apparently was written under extreme deadline pressure because Alexander noted in the middle of it that the courier who would carry the dispatch had saddled his horse and was ready to leave.¹⁷

Nonetheless, Alexander was able to describe in precise detail the various smaller battles that made up Gettysburg, giving readers a vivid picture of the famous scene. As he was often wont to do, he tried to put the best face on the

¹⁶"Latest from Gen. Lee's Army," Savannah Daily News, 9 July 1863, 2.

¹⁷Although the most famous battle of the war produced several fine stories by correspondents, according to Andrews, "the most widely reprinted and probably best account of the battle" was the story written by Alexander. Andrews, South Reports the Civil War, 128.

Confederate loss, noting that both Confederate and Federal armies left the battlefield "worn, battle-scarred and severely punished." But Alexander recognized that even Confederate tactics were highly questionable. He raised questions about General Lee's decision to fight at the time and place he did. He also questioned why Lee ordered an attack on the second day without proper reconnaissance.⁸⁸

Once the story of Gettysburg finally emerged, Georgia's newspapers reacted variously. The *Atlanta Southern Confederacy* said it hoped the Confederate Army would never invade the North again, arguing that the South could not afford to lose so many men again.⁸⁹ The *Columbus Enquirer*, on the other hand, remained defiant and said the North had overestimated its success.⁹⁰ The *Columbus Times* even went so far as to claim that "a great important victory has been achieved by our arms on Yankee soil."⁹¹ The Augusta Constitutionalist probably best summed up the situation after Gettysburg and Vicksburg. "[O]ur situation is not

⁸⁸For one of the best studies of Gettysburg, which raises some of the same questions as Alexander, see Edwin S. Redkey, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1965).

⁸⁹"The Situation," *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, 29 July 1863, 2.

⁹⁰"The Situation," *Columbus Enquirer*, 14 July 1863, 2.

⁹¹"The Situation," *Columbus Times*, 14 July 1863, 1.

nearly as good as it was a month ago," the newspaper declared, "on our prospects as cheering. . . ."⁴²

Fighting Charleston

After the devastating news from Vicksburg and Gettysburg early in July, Georgia's press took some comfort in the draft riots that took place in New York City later in the month. For four days, hundreds of men, mainly immigrants who believed they were being forced to fight for the freedom of blacks who would eventually take away their jobs, terrorized the city. At least 100 people were killed in what was, at the time, the worst riot in American history.⁴³ Using their biggest, multiple-deck headlines, most of the state's daily newspapers gave plenty of space to the riots. Many also editorialized. Typical of the theme of the editorials was the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel which said the violence revealed "a growing hostility to the war" in the north. The paper proclaimed confidently that the riots foreshadowed the formation of a peace party which would "first embroil and then extinguish" the Republican Party.⁴⁴

During the summer of 1863, Charleston, South Carolina, once again became the scene of fighting. A Federal attack

⁴²"The Situation," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 14 July 1863, 1.

⁴³McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 408-411.

⁴⁴"The Triumph of the Mob in New York," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 28 July 1863, 2.

as the city had been ravaged since the beginning of the year. The Union navy wanted to stop the blockade runners entering and leaving the harbor.⁴⁵ Believing that a major battle was imminent, Alexander had visited Charleston in March to survey the scene. Although he could find no signs of military activity, he saw the impact the war was having on the city. In a story for the Southwestern Republican, he described what blocks of retail establishments that were closed because many of the men were away fighting.⁴⁶

On April 7, a fleet of Union ironclads sailed into the harbor in an attempt to silence the Confederate shore batteries. But terrific fire from the Confederates quite forced the ironclads to withdraw after losing one vessel. To correspondent Alexander, the naval battle at the citadel of secession was a "magnificent spectacle." He went on to write:

the white puffs of smoke issuing from the portholes of the ironclads with a tongue of fire in the center, the salient masts kept up by these huge monsters as they were led past the forts, the fantastic fashions of smoke that quivered the heads of the fort and slowly floated off to the north . . . the silent city and the breathless multitude who crowded the battlements and promenade, made up a spectacle at once grand and imposing.⁴⁷

⁴⁵E. Wiley Burton, The Block of Charleston, 1840-1865 (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 180-187.

⁴⁶Southwestern Republican, 18 March 1862, 2.

⁴⁷Southwestern Republican, 8 April 1862, 2.

Perhaps sensing that his report of the battle had more flowery language than real substance, Alexander sent another letter the next week describing the difficulties of covering naval operations. The correspondent said that damage inflicted on enemy warships, especially ironclads, was difficult to determine. "It is very different when the combats take place on land where the line of battle is frequently several miles in extent, and where the beaten party leaves behind him dead and wounded to tell the tale of the disaster," Alexander added.⁸⁸

A week after Gettysburg, the Federal fleet made another attack on Charleston. They were aided by Union troops who captured inland defenses on the south end of Morris Island. But the force was stopped when it attempted to overpower other Confederate defenses. James Speed, the *Seventeenth* *Republican's* editor, was in Charleston and reported on the fighting for his paper. His two letters to his paper reflected the gloom of losing the southern defenses, but optimistic after Federal troops were beaten back. Speed was back in Charleston in August when Federal warships began a series of heavy bombardments on Fort Sumter. The editor visited the Confederate harbor defenses and a friend later provided him with a boat in order that he could get a look at how Fort Sumter was holding up under the attack. The heavy fire from Union ships kept Speed from getting as close

⁸⁸ *Seventeenth Republican*, 13 April 1863, 1.

as he would have liked. Still, he reported that the one face of the fort was "one vast ruin. A pile of rubbish--brick, mortar, stone, timber and gun--rises from the water and forms an inclined plane to the original parapet, some fifty feet in height." Reed attributed the Federal success to the fact that "the enemy have a navy, while we have none."⁶⁹

Samuel Chester Field also was in Charleston reporting for the *Hilario Intelligencer*. Writing under the pen name, "Doc," he reported on the excitement and confusion when Union guns turned their sights on the city on August 22. Soon after the bombardment began, many women and children fled, leaving the city desolate. "The usual crowds that visited the City Battery and the elegant and liveried equipages that were wont to roll along the fashionable drive in front of the battery promenade have all vanished," Field wrote.⁷⁰

The attacks on Charleston and Fort Sumter continued into the fall with few tangible results for Union forces. Back in Georgia, more changes and problems were being faced by the state's newspapers. Paper shortages were exacerbated when the Marietta Paper Mill outside Atlanta, the largest in

⁶⁹ *Evansville Republican*, 24 August 1863, 1.

⁷⁰ Field was a veteran newspaperman who corresponded for several newspapers during the war including the *New Orleans Picayune*, *Memphis Appeal*, *Mobile Register*, and *Washington Advertising Advertiser*. Andrews, *The South Reports The Civil War*, 12-13.

the state, suspended operations for several weeks in September because of a shortage of workers. Shortages of personnel also continued to plague the state's newspapers as more men joined the Confederate army. The Atlanta Daily Intelligencer carried the following advertisement in 1862:

A good compositor, one who does not keep "fashionable hours," can find a permanent "sit" in this office. Those that are in the habit of getting intoxicated need not apply.

Elsewhere, the editor of the Columbus Enquirer, John H. Martin, and two compositors had to take a leave of absence from the paper in the fall when their company in the state militia was ordered to Atlanta. While Martin was leaving, another editor was coming home from the war. In October, voters in Floyd County elected the News Courier's editor, Melville Winsell, to the Georgia House of Representatives. Although he was more than one hundred miles away with his regiment at Chattanooga, "R.D." won the election by a margin of almost two-to-one over his closest competitor.⁷¹

Changes were taking place at other Georgia newspapers as well. In November, James Swisher sold the Augusta Constitutionalist, and a weekly magazine, the Southern Field & Firearm, to J. L. Stanton & Co., headed by John

⁷¹Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 3 December 1861, 1. The need for only "value" was to apply for jobs appeared in similar ads carried by other Georgia newspapers.

⁷²News Courier, 14 October 1861, 1. Winsell left the army to attend the legislature's fall session. He did not return to the army, but reported on proceedings of the legislature for the rest of the war.

Stockton, the paper's managing editor. Gardner had owned the Constitutionalist since 1850.

Soldier Correspondents

Throughout the year, soldier correspondents had continued to send letters to their papers back home in Georgia. The letters varied widely in the quality of the writing and content. At their best they provided a glimpse of army life and the hardships the troops often faced. In January 1863, "Polkstar," whose regiment was camped near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, reported how he had to endure bitter cold for days without a blanket or overcoat. While on picket duty, the Atlanta Southern Confederacy correspondent accused himself of watching the campfires of the Federal army. And for an entire week he did not wash his face or leave the trenches except for a few hours one night.⁷¹

Some of the correspondents could be refreshingly honest. For example, a letter from correspondent "O.A.S." of the Atlanta Daily Intelligence described the dishonesty of officers who did not enforce discipline in the troops. He wrote:

It is a lamentable truth that while there are many holding responsible positions who are of professional inability, there are many of depraved and immoral character. Some portions of the army constitute nothing more than armed mobs, who without law or order or consideration, assault the rights of their own friends with as much indignity and indecency as if they were

⁷¹"Correspondence of the Southern Confederacy," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 13 January 1863, 2.

menace. There is such a thing as discipline and there is no excuse for not enforcing it. Lawlessness, drunkenness, [and] gambling are frequently not only known, but even tolerated. . . .

"Tivoli," another correspondent for the Southern Confederacy, described the discipline caused in his brigade by the murder of a farmer who was shot by Confederate soldiers who robbed his hen house. Every effort was being made to find the guilty man in the regiment, the correspondent reported. In the meantime, the regiment was raising money for the farmer's widow.⁷³ In another letter, Tivoli described the punishments handed out to law breakers in the army. Soldiers found guilty of serious crimes were shot by a firing squad. Those found guilty of less serious offenses usually were required to march with a ball and chain or wear a "flour barrel shirt." This last punishment was "very much dreaded," he reported.⁷⁴

But the accuracy of news reported by some soldier correspondents was highly questionable as when they reported on casualty figures or the role their particular regiment played in a battle. In such cases, the Confederacy's losses

⁷³"Editorial Correspondence," *Atlanta Daily Intelligencer*, 12 December 1862, 2.

⁷⁴"Our Army Correspondence," *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, 2 April 1862, 2.

⁷⁵"Our Special Virginia Army Correspondent," *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, 2 April 1862, 2. For more on the problems of lawlessness in the Confederate army, see Bill Irwin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1943), 16-28.

were severely underestimated and the regiment the correspondent was a member of performed heroic feats. Other correspondents also used their letters to do little more than glorify battle. "T.O.W.," a soldier correspondent who sent in regular letters to the American Confederacy, sent the following after a battle in Tennessee earlier in the year:

See our brave little band as they advance with deadly impetuosity, upon the foe, and in a perfect shower of bullets meeting his numerous columns as hard too hard combat! The earth fairly shook as regiment after regiment of the foe crossed their steel; but their brave hearts withstood the shock, fire and undaunted the whistling bayonets of thousands and not deter them, but whenever their leader pointed, there they rushed with stout hearts to do his bidding.

Peter W. Alexander recognized the fictitious nature of such stories when he wrote:

The war abounds in more romantic incidents and thrilling adventures than poet ever imagined or novelist described; and it would be well if the writers of fiction from the army, who devote themselves to the marvelous and poetical aspects of affairs rather than to the stern realities of the campaign would remember this fact. Not every heroic act, every daring adventure, he gathered up and embodied in the hearts of the people; but let us not interpolate upon the history of these stern times the exaggerations of thoughtless scribblers, nor the weak inventions of sentimental chroniclers.

Additionally, many soldier correspondents wrote in a windy, overly inflated style that was frequently specious

⁷⁵"Our special correspondence from the Army in East Tennessee," American Southern Confederacy, 28 January 1862, 1.

⁷⁶"Editorial Correspondence," American Southern Confederacy, 18 May 1862, 1.

and Lashamite. In describing one fight, "Ivo" of the Rose Courier wrote:

For eight hours a most terrific and murderous fire was exchanged between General and Lee; every conceivable missile of death was brought into requisition, sped upon the bloody slabs with a stubborn animosity and a will to do or die, which seemed to nerve the arm, steady the aim, and animate breasts of the appealing hosts.

Before he left the army in October, editor Drinell continued to send fine letters that provided readers a vivid picture of army life. In one correspondence he described the hardships of serving on picket duty at night, especially when the enemy's lines were close.⁸⁰ In another, Drinell told of how the troops always were in the best spirits after resting from a series of long, tiring marches. But if they ran stayed more than a week in the same place,

they got too much for the exercise they take, physical exertion becomes irksome, and business steals over them like clouds in the night. Then there is any amount of grumbling towards everybody, and in regard to everything; the men even quarreling among themselves upon their own nothing, belonging word and order. . .

As the year wore on, soldier correspondents increasingly paid compliments to the Federal army. Writing from Tennessee, "J.B.C." of the Columbus Enquirer said that

⁷⁹"Gay Tennessee Correspondence," Rose Courier, 3 October 1863, 1.

⁸⁰"Editorial Correspondence," Rose Courier, 3 May 1863, 1.

⁸¹"Editorial Correspondence," Rose Courier, 28 November 1863, 2.

despite what was being written by other journalists, many men in his company were suffering from ill health. He then took correspondents to task for making statements that "blind the people at home as to our true condition. . . ." With remarkable candor, he went on:

It is well enough for the people to know that here, we have to fight a foe, the majority of whom are our equals in courage and physical ability; a foe who, from their position, are endued to hardships; a foe that can use a knife and handle a rifle with the same facility that we can. We are not fighting the blue rascals on the Potomac--against whom our good Southern men in a match for five, but we are fighting men who are our equals in courage and physical strength.

After the battle of Brandy Station in Virginia, another Enquirer correspondent gave this heartfetched compliment: "The cavalry forces of the Yankees are very superior troops, and fight with a spirit worthy of a better cause."⁸¹

Georgia newspapers also continued to print atrocity stories during the year. The Augusta Constitutionalist reported the prisoners in the jails in Memphis, Tennessee, were being turned loose to burn and destroy property. "In the whole catalogue of human crime and desperate malignity, nothing can be found too diabolical for Yankee malice," the paper said. "No outrage can be too fiendish to suit the insatiable thirst of Yankee hate of the Southern people."⁸²

⁸¹"Letter from J.T.G.," Columbus Enquirer, 14 April 1863, 2.

⁸²"From Wood's Division," Columbus Enquirer, 23 June 1863, 1.

The editor of the Atlanta Confederacy claimed in 1863 that he had seen copies of letters from the wives and sweethearts of Union soldiers. The language of the correspondence, he wrote, was "as loathsome, as utterly degraded, that it is strange the hands that wrote them were not stricken powerless in the act. . . ." The editor added, "surely the race we are fighting against will be hereafter celebrated as the lowest on the scale of created beings."⁸¹

Twissell, usually exceedingly fair, also was not above reading an occasional atrocity story back to his newspaper. In early 1863 he reported the story of Northern soldiers who forced a Negro with amputated legs to swim across the river to where Confederate troops were camped with the idea of infecting the Southerners. The Confederates learned what they were doing and forced the Negro to swim back. He could not make it, however, and drowned. Twissell concluded caustically: "Thus is but a little incident, yet it speaks whole volumes of abolition history and illustrates their style of warfare. Such low-lived, sneaking, devilish tricks characterize their efforts to subjugate a high-toned, chivalric, and brave people."⁸²

⁸¹"Atrocious Schemes of Enslavement," Augusta Constitutionalist, 28 January 1863, 3.

⁸²"The Lowest Depths of Cruelty," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 3 May 1863, 3.

⁸³"Editorial Correspondence," Richmond Courier, 12 January 1863, 3.

The Battle of Chattanooga

In mid-August Union forces commanded by General William S. Rosecrans finally began making their move on Chattanooga where General Braxton Bragg's Confederate army was guarding the city. Chattanooga was the last defensible Confederate strong point left in Tennessee. Nestled in the mountains on the border with Georgia, the city was a major rail link between the north and the southern Confederacy. Bragg and the Confederate command had chosen to stand and fight there.⁸⁷

Rosecrans decided to try and bypass Chattanooga and seize the rail line south of the city. By the time Bragg realized what was happening, he had no choice but to abandon Chattanooga and make a stand to the south in mountainous northwest Georgia. In the meantime, the Confederate command had decided to reinforce Bragg. Longstreet's corps was dispatched from Lee's army and sent south by train. Johnston also was ordered to send two of his divisions in Mississippi to Bragg.

All the activity did not escape Georgia's press, although no one knew exactly what was happening. In early September, the editor of the Savannah Daily Georgian noted that "all eyes are turned toward Tennessee, where a great . . . battle of the war will be fought." An editorial

⁸⁷ Fairfax Downey, Storming the Gateway: Chattanooga, 1862, (New York: David McKay, 1961), 68-74.

in the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer noted that there were "a thousand reports and rumors afloat" about the situation in Tennessee. "The best advice we can give our people is to keep up a stout heart, be full of hope, and trust in Providence. . . ." the paper remarked. The residents of Rome, less than seventy-five miles south of Chattanooga, were especially interested in the news from Tennessee. In mid-September, the same corrier said no reliable information was available about what was happening. In the meantime, the newspaper said, "Summers continue to be as plentiful as blackberries in June. . . ."²⁰

On September 19, the maneuvering became evident as the two armies collided along Chickamauga Creek in northwest Georgia. The only Georgia correspondent to witness fighting at Chickamauga was the Savannah Republican's "Foot-la-Roads." He had accompanied Longstreet's corps on the trip from Virginia and was with Hood's division on the first day of the battle. The first day of fighting ended inconclusively. "Foot-la-Roads" described the harvest moon that rose over the battlefield. The silence, he wrote, was broken only by the shrieks of the wounded.²¹

In his report of the next day's battle, "Foot-la-Roads" described Longstreet and Hood riding along their lines

²⁰"From the Front," Rome Courier, 18 September 1863, 2.

²¹Savannah Republican, 20 September 1863, 2.

before the fighting began. Hood called as he told his soldiers, "Boys, all went well yesterday on the right." The Confederate advance stalled during the morning after fierce resistance by Union troops. Reported assaults caused the Federal commanders to keep calling for reinforcements and, in the process of shifting troops, Rosecrans inadvertently left a gap in his line open. Confederate troops charged through the opening and split the Union line, causing many Federal troops to retreat to Chattanooga. One Union corps remained in the field, however, and fought gallantly until late in the afternoon. "Frost-in-March" expressed the belief that if there had been three more hours of daylight, the remainder of the Federal army would have escaped "only in squads."⁸⁰

Indeed, Chattanooga was a major victory for the South. It also proved to be the bloodiest battle fought in the western theater and the bloodiest fought on Georgia soil. But while the Union army was forced out of Georgia back into Chattanooga, Bragg refused the pleas of his lieutenants to push his advantage and complete the destruction of Rosecrans' troops.⁸¹ The morning after the battle, "Frost-in-March" told of walking over the battlefield where most of the Confederate army was still camped. Some of the

⁸⁰ *Daytonah Republican*, 15 September 1863, 2.

⁸¹ Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chattanooga* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 318-319.

soldiers, he candidly wrote, amused themselves by rifling through the pockets of dead and wounded [Federal] soldiers. They also joked and made loud comments upon reading love letters of the Union soldiers or discovering a picture of a soldier's girlfriend.⁸⁸

Peter M. Alexander arrived too late to witness the battle. He had left Richmond in mid-September after arranging with the *Richmond Dispatch* to represent the paper in Gregg's army, along with the *Severash Republican* and the *Mobile Register*. He stopped in Savannah on his way to Chickasaw and did not begin the last leg of his journey until the battle's second day. Because he missed the battle, Alexander had to rely on the statements of others for his report. But unlike Fredericksburg, where "F.R.A." also arrived late but still managed to file an excellent story, his account of Chickasaw lacked the details and graphic description Alexander's work had become known for. In his correspondence, he also lapsed into excessive language and made exaggerated statements. For example, he described Chickasaw as "the most important battle of the war, after that of first Manassas."⁸⁹

Similar excessiveness also was evident in James Chester Reid's account of Chickasaw. Reid had traveled from Charleston to Chickasaw to cover the campaign for the

⁸⁸ *Severash Republican*, 4 October 1863, 2.

⁸⁹ *Mobile Advertiser & Register*, 25 September 1863, 1.

Atlanta Daily-Intelligencer and other papers. His story, which was reprinted in many of the state's papers, began:

The soil of Georgia, marked by the war-tell of the enemy, has at last become with her sister States, dyed in the blood of the revolution, while on the banks of the "River of Death," [Chickamauga] lie the bones of the infidel foe, who have been slaughtered by our heroes by the thousands.

Such language ran throughout the story as Reid found every way possible to praise the Confederate troops while, at the same time, heaping abuse on the Federals. He went on to write:

The fighting of our men on Sunday evening in carrying the enemy's entrenchments was magnificent, grand and terrible. They faced the whirled of lead and iron with the steadiness and composure of a conqueror's train. Then came charge after charge. The frightful gaps in our lines being immediately closed up, and with the yell of demons, our battle cry arose above the roar and crash of musketry and artillery, while the terror-stricken foe fell back upon us our horses mounted and carried their entrenchments, line after line, over the dead carcasses of the Abolition foe, who fell in heaps in the pits they had dug for themselves.

Back home, editors hailed the news from Chickamauga: "[t]he enemy no longer pollutes Georgia soil with his presence: . . . Georgia owes to Gen. Bragg and his gallant army an eternal debt of gratitude," the Daily-Intelligencer said in an editorial.¹² Using its most colorful language, the Atlanta Constitutionalist exclaimed, "The dark night is past, and rosy morning purples the east again. After months

¹²"The Battle of Chickamauga," Columbus Enquirer, 29 October 1863, 1.

¹³"The Battle of Chickamauga," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 24 September 1863, 3.

of reverses, soon were the jubiliant notes of the victorious Confederates heard clear and full throughout the land. Honor and glory to the heroes of Chickamauga, living and dead!²⁰

With the Union Army reformed at Chattanooga, Bragg chose to lay siege to the city. On September 23, he established his headquarters on Missionary Ridge overlooking the city. In a letter written from Chattanooga five days later, Alexander confirmed reports that "Rosecrans has not evacuated Chattanooga nor is there any reason to believe that he has any intention." The correspondent then expressed the view of Bragg's lieutenants that, "Possibly the place could have been carried by storm, though not without heavy loss, had we pressed forward from the victorious field of Chickamauga [sic]. If any mistake has been committed it was in not making the effort at the time-- It is too late now, I fear."²¹

The Battle of Chattanooga

With most attention focused on the fighting along the Georgia-Tennessee border, Georgia's gubernatorial election in 1863 was conducted in relative quiet, quite a contrast from the race two years earlier. Until late summer it appeared as if Governor Brown would not even have an

²⁰"Georgia Redeemed," *Atlanta Constitution*, 28 September 1863, 3.

²¹*Richmond Dispatch*, 8 October 1863, 3.

opponent. Then in August, Joshua Hill, a former United States congressman who had opposed secession, announced his candidacy. Timothy Parlow, a wealthy planter and state legislator, later announced his candidacy to make it a three-man race. But neither Hill or Parlow campaigned vigorously and Brown won an easy victory, receiving 16,879 votes to 17,038 for Hill and 12,004 for Parlow. Most of the state's newspapers supported one of Brown's opponents, but their attacks on the governor were far less strident than in 1841. Most editors showed little interest in the outcome of the race and most devoted only a paragraph or two to the results.¹⁴

Meanwhile, disputes between Bragg and his lieutenants had continued after the battle of Chickasago. Longstreet and others recommended to officials in Richmond that Bragg be removed from command for his failure to pursue the Federals after defeating them at Chickasago. President Davis dispatched an aide to learn more about the situation and the aide later wired the president saying his presence was urgently needed. Davis arrived at Bragg's headquarters on October 5.¹⁵ From Atlanta, where he had gone on a shopping visit, Alexander expressed uncertainty about the purpose of the president's visit, but he clearly recognized that problems existed within the Confederate command. "The

¹⁴Parks, *Joseph E. Brown of Georgia*, 281-282.

¹⁵Coxsack, *This Terrible South*, 427-428.

he come to single with his soldiers and arrange them by his presence?" he asked. "[S]hould he come to compose the strife of officers, and, if need be, to institute a change in the command of the army?"¹⁰⁰ Davis stayed in Chattanooga for five days trying in vain to reconcile the dispute. The president eventually decided to keep Bragg in command and remove three of his lieutenants.

As the standoff in Chattanooga continued, Alexander and Reid reported about how the conditions in the Confederate camp were worsening. Alexander described soldiers who performed guard duty in trenches half filled with water as a result of heavy rains. Many of the soldiers did not have tents and were forced to sleep with only one blanket despite the cold temperatures.¹⁰¹ Reid had visited Atlanta in mid-October, but later returned to north Georgia by train. The railroad bridge between Tunnel Hill and Ringgold in northwest Georgia was still under construction, so he accepted a friend's offer to take him to Chattanooga in a buggy. On the trip he passed over the Chickamauga battlefield where the bleeding bodies of Union dead were still uncovered. Eventually, Reid arrived at the camp of

¹⁰⁰ *Newman's Republican*, 24 October 1863, 3. Alexander was outraged at the prices he found in Atlanta. "A suit of winter clothes at \$800--think of that," he wrote.

¹⁰¹ Reid was more concerned with his own condition as he described the "tribula and tribulations of a correspondent who has a horse to feed and take care of and who especially has to do his own foraging, and no corn to be had at that. . . ." *Atlanta Daily Constitution*, 3 October 1863, 2.

John Bell Hood's division at Lookout Mountain. There he learned from soldiers that the general was recovering from a leg amputation and that his troops had raised five thousand dollars to buy the best cork leg available.¹⁸²

During the days leading up to the battle of Chattanooga, Alexander dared to criticize Confederate commanders again. This time he aimed his sights on the practice of many officers to have large mounted escorts. Alexander expressed concern about the shortage of horses in the army, attributing the problem, in part, to the "scandalous exhibition of military vanity" by high-ranking officers who used the escorts. He reported that one officer had an escort of forty mounted men and another officer had one hundred and twenty-five.¹⁸³ Alexander's letter was reprinted by other Southern newspapers and Bragg issued an order correcting the abuse.¹⁸⁴

Meanwhile, Reid was making contact in early November. Reporting from atop Missionary Ridge, he described the "magnificent scene" in the valley below as camp fires of Confederate and Federal troops illuminated the night. Perhaps inspired by the grand view, the correspondent predicted great success for the Confederacy. "[T]here is a

¹⁸²Atlanta Daily Intelligence, October 28, 31, 1863, 2.

¹⁸³Memphis Republican, 16 November 1863, 1.

¹⁸⁴Andrew, The South Against the Civil War, 248.

good time coming," he wrote. "The young ebb tide of our revolution, is generally swelling and advancing, toward the shore of hope and promise, and there is something that tells us we shall soon rise on the flood of success."¹⁰¹ Kold's confidence proved to be off the mark. While Confederate troops held the high ground, Union forces were active below. Lincoln had made Grant commander of the western theater and the general had come to Chattanooga to oversee the campaign. The Northern command also dispatched reinforcements to the city.¹⁰²

On November 24, the Federal army began its attack. Fighting is intermittent for three brigades seized the northern slope of Lookout Mountain in what later came to be remembered as the "Battle Above the Clouds." Bragg was forced to evacuate his defenses on the mountain and concentrate them on Missionary Ridge. The next day, Grant ordered an attack on Bragg's lines. Divisions under the command of General George Thomas broke through the middle of the entrenched Confederates on rugged Missionary Ridge. The Federals swept over the first line of defenses with relative ease, and not awaiting further orders, continued up the steep ridge. Watching in amazement, Confederate troops

¹⁰¹ "Army Correspondence," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 4 November 1863, 3.

¹⁰² Thomas Lawrence Connelly, Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1863 (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 112-113.

perished and fled. Gregg's army was broken. Only rear guard action saved the Confederates from complete annihilation.⁴⁸⁷

In a remarkably candid account, Alexander did not mince words about the action of Confederate forces at Missionary Ridge. For the first time in the war, Alexander criticized the fighting spirit of the troops. He wrote, "The confederates have sustained the most ignominious defeat of the whole war--a defeat for which there is little excuse or mitigation. For the first time . . . defeat is chargeable to the troops themselves and not the blunders or incompetency of their leaders."⁴⁸⁸ While Alexander focused on Confederate troops for their actions at Missionary Ridge, the *Columbus Enquirer's* "A.E.C." gave credit to the Federal soldiers for the tremendous courage they displayed attacking such an entrenched line. His description of the Federal charge was outstanding:

On they came, four lines deep, through the timber that skirts the old field. Gradually, they approached our deserted trenches, halted as if to rest. A hundred cannon were throwing shells into their midst, yet not a break in their lines was visible. They were at the base of the ridge. Sharp and rugged was the path they must ascend before they could hope to cope with us upon anything like equal footing. To them it certainly must have appeared that certain death awaited them; but at the word from their commanders they stepped forward with alacrity. When within about fifty yards of the top we opened a terrible fire upon them with our rifles, which sent them back to the bottom of the ridge

⁴⁸⁷Dowsey, *Storming the Salient*, 154-155.

⁴⁸⁸"editorial correspondence," *Columbus Enquirer*, 1 December 1863, 2.

again. We continued to fire, but they reformed and came again. They soon, however, lost all organization; each one commenced firing upon his own hook, and crawling slowly toward the crest of the ridge. The firing of our troops at this juncture was rapid and terrible, and in many places along the line of the enemy their troops disappeared under our destructive discharges, but within a harsome volley of all execution they breached the ladder store and planted their colors up on the top of Missionary Ridge. . . .¹⁰⁰

Held's report for the Daily Intelligencer is harder to comprehend. He sought to minimize the Confederate defeat, claiming incorrectly that it was "not over two percent of our force."¹⁰¹ In a later story, he even went as far as to assert that the collapse of Confederate troops at the center of the fighting was a blessing in disguise because if they had remained steadfast the whole Confederate army might have been captured. Held claimed confidently that "we shall soon be ready for them again."¹⁰²

Many Georgia editors were catagorized in their disappointment over the loss at Chatterenge. Typical was the Kenn Courier which said in an editorial, "It would be unbecomid to deny and useless to conceal, our disappointment at this untoward result, after having heard officers, soldiers, and citizens speak with so much confidence of our position of Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain."¹⁰³ The

¹⁰⁰"The Battle of Missionary Ridge," Columbus Enquirer, 2 December 1863, 3.

¹⁰¹Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 28 November 1863, 3.

¹⁰²Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 4 December 1863, 3.

¹⁰³"From the Front," Kenn Courier, 28 December 1863, 3.

defeat also sent some editors looking for someone or something to blame. The Milledgeville Confederate Union blamed financial problems at home caused by speculators and extortioners who were getting rich from the war. This led some soldiers to desert the army to take care of their families and led others to become demoralized.¹¹³

After the disaster at Missionary Ridge, Bragg moved his shattered command to winter quarters in north Georgia near Dalton. But Chattanooga proved to be the end of Bragg's command. The general tendered his resignation; President Davis accepted and appointed Johnston to the command.¹¹⁴ As Bragg was about to leave the army, Alexander visited the general's headquarters and interviewed him. "P.M.A." reported that Bragg spoke openly about the battle and expressed concern about the condition of his troops. Perhaps moved by Bragg's comments, Alexander wrote a sympathetic profile of the general. The correspondent described the general as "simply a soldier" who was popular with his troops, if not his commanders. Alexander conceded that Bragg was "destitute of diplomacy, and knows neither friends nor foes in the discharge of his duty." Still looking for kind words, Alexander also credited the general

¹¹³"Who Is to Blame?" Milledgeville Confederate Union, 28 December 1863, 3.

¹¹⁴Currently, Adams on Bragg, 276-278.

with being "the hardest worker I have met within the Confederate camp."¹²³

The defeat at Shattanooga had a sobering effect on Georgia's press. Faced with the Union army just across the border, editors admitted the state was in grave peril. But each kept up a brave front. Their attitude was best expressed by the Atlanta Southern Messenger which declared in a front-page editorial, "The situation as far as Georgia is concerned, is not a pleasant one. . . . It is no time to waver, but with stern resolve let every freeman resolve to meet the foe as becomes men fighting for everything they hold dear."¹²⁴

Conclusion

Eighteen sixty-three had proven to be a disastrous year for the Confederacy. The devastating defeats at Vicksburg, Gettysburg, and Shattanooga were serious setbacks for the Southern cause. Georgia's editors preached calm, but the costly losses had deepened much of their enthusiasm for the war. They also recognized that for the first time the state faced a grave threat from Union forces. Establishment of the Confederate Press Association, for which several of the state's editors deserve partial credit, had provided a more reliable link with the rest of the Confederacy. The state's

¹²³Samuel B. Harrison, 28 December 1863, 2.

¹²⁴"The Situation," Atlanta Southern Messenger, 28 December 1863, 1.

readers also were provided with excellent accounts of the year's fighting. In fact, the quality of reporting from Georgia's correspondents reached its zenith during 1943. The war increasingly was making victims of the state's newspapers and correspondents. There would be even more victims in the year to come.

CHAPTER 4
"DEERER PROSECUTED WAS DELIBERATELY"

Continued

The new year began bitterly cold near Dalton, Georgia, where Samuel Hunter Reid was reporting from the winter quarters of the Army of Tennessee. A thermometer in the Confederate camp registered four degrees, and it was so cold that Reid had to keep the ink stand he was using next to a fire to prevent the ink from freezing. Despite the cold, Reid, who continued to report for the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, wrote that Southern troops had welcomed in the new year in fine style. Food, drink, and good cheer had been enjoyed by everyone.¹

Much had changed in Georgia over the past year. For the first time in almost three years of fighting, the state faced a direct threat from the Federal army. General William T. Sherman's campaign against the state would prove to have a devastating effect on its newspapers. While the fighting raged and the Union army plunged deeper into the state, editors kept up their propaganda campaigns, trying readers not to give up hope. But at the same time some editors were trying to find words of encouragement to greet,

¹"Army Correspondence," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 3 January 1864, 3.

sons of their brethren were forced to cease publishing. Faced with the Union threat, editors packed up their presses and moved them elsewhere. Perhaps the best indication of how 1864 would turn out was the fact that by the end of the year the unthinkable had occurred: a "rebel" newspaper was appearing on the streets in Savannah.

Condition of Georgia's Newspapers

As the new year began, many Georgia editors no doubt wondered how they could continue publishing another year. The cost of materials had been climbing steadily throughout the war, and editors had been forced to raise their subscription rates to keep up with the higher prices. The Macon Daily Telegraph, for example, had an annual subscription rate of five dollars when the war began. By May 1863, the rate had climbed to twelve dollars annually. Later that year, the paper was only available by quarterly subscription. The quarterly rate jumped to nine dollars early in 1864.

Despite the high cost of publishing, the Albany Patriot reappeared in southwest Georgia after suspending publication two years earlier. In the January 22 issue, A.J. McCarthy announced he had sold the paper to J.W. Pearce, a former resident of Albany who had moved to Macon.² Pearce apparently was a man of some wealth who operated a plantation and also owned a dry goods store in Macon, but

²"Salehistory," Albany Patriot, 22 January 1864, 2.

there was no indication he had any experience in publishing. In a "Salutatory" in the same January 31 issue, Peare wrote that he had turned over daily operation of the paper to two printers, E.W. Henson and William F. Walker, war veterans who had been injured and returned home to Georgia.²

Henson and Walker declared that the weekly would be impartial in its editorial comment, noting, "We will recognize no friend or foe but our country's." In a plea for community support--and obviously in need of money--the new publishers wrote, "Send us your names, advertisements, job work, and the CASH." Mindful of the paper's problems publishing every week, they declared those days were over. "Hereafter, we assure you, there will be no skipping or lagging about this establishment."³ Six weeks later, however, the Exirist was late publishing once again. The reason: co-publisher Walker had died from injuries he received in the war. He was twenty-eight years old and had been married six months earlier.⁴ For the remainder of the war, Henson published the Exirist with only occasional help from a local teenage boy.

²"Salutatory," Albany Patriot, 31 January 1864, 2.

³"Salutatory," Albany Patriot, 31 January 1864, 1.

⁴In an editorial eulogy, Henson described Walker as "steady, persevering and industrious in business, and kind, affable and upright in social life." With his death, "The community lost a faithful servant and good citizen, and we a special associate and friend." "Death of Wm. F. Walker," Albany Patriot, 3 March 1864, 2.

Meanwhile, the state's press continued to struggle with the problems that had plagued them since early in the war, especially material shortages and inadequate financing. Demanding higher wages, printers in Atlanta went on strike in April. For a week, the city's two major dailies, the *Intelligencer* and the *Southern Confederacy*, were silenced. In their place, printers published their own daily newspaper, the *Atlanta Herald*.⁶ In an editorial note the day the *Intelligencer* began publishing again, publisher Jared L. Whitaker complained that printers, who were demanding a fifty percent increase in wages, had given no warning that they might strike. He went on to write:

We will not dispute the necessity that prompted this act of theirs. But we did, and do now protest against the manner, the abruptness, the want of courtesy, that characterized the act--the denial of time to consider what they conceived to be a just demand, and the time selected for it.

What prompted the strike to end and whether the printers received an increase in their wages were never made clear, although from the tone of the editorial note it appears few, if any, of the demands were met. Whitaker wrote that he was struggling simply to keep the newspaper publishing and that it would not be his fault if printers went on strike again.⁷

⁶No copies of the *Herald* apparently survived the war. John Lee Newberry, *Atlanta Journalism of the Civil War Period* (Nashville, Tenn.: George Peabody College, 1913), 22.

⁷"Second," *Atlanta Daily Intelligencer*, 18 April 1864, 1. The *Southern Times* sympathized with the plight of Atlanta's newspapers. One of the paper's editors wrote, "There is one thing that seems certain, and that is that the

In June, the Hillsboroville Southern Recorder, one of the few newspapers in the state that had not been forced to reduce its size, appeared as a half-sheet for the first time because of the small stock of paper available. The editor said it was the first time in the newspaper's forty-four year history that it had not published four full pages. The Southern Recorder continued publishing as a half-sheet every week but one for the rest of the war.⁸

The practice of Atlanta readers paying for their newspapers with produce had become so popular by 1864 that the Southern Watchman began publishing a list of the prices it would allow in exchange for the paper, which was the dollars actually at this point. According to the Southern Watchman's list, corn, rye, peas and beans fetched one dollar per bushel, butter and lard went for fifteen cents per pound, and chickens got fifteen cents each. The list concluded: "Thus, it will be seen, that a bushel and half of wheat, two bushels of corn or peas, or four gallons of sorghum syrup . . . will pay one year's subscription to the Southern Watchman."⁹

fact of the Atlanta press will be felt of the Southern press is writers get much worse, or a cheaper system of labor cannot be devised. There are comparatively few Southern journals that are even now self-sustaining. The difficulties in the way of producing programs will doubtless force upon publishers the necessity of employing girls and boys to do the work heretofore done by men." "The Atlanta Press," 12 April 1864, 3.

⁸ Hillsboroville Southern Recorder, 21 June 1864, 3.

⁹ Atlanta Southern Watchman, 1 June 1864, 3.

With homes under increasing threat from the Union army, editor and publisher Melville Bissell stopped publication of the town's last surviving newspaper, the *Courier*. No advance notice was given for the suspension; the newspaper simply stopped publishing in May. The *Atlanta Southern Confederacy's* editor later announced that Bissell had visited their office and described how he was forced to flee the town with only a few of the newspaper's supplies. The editor who had spent more than two years in the Confederate army and survived several major battles said he would resume publication as soon as possible.¹⁸

Local and Humorous News

As the fighting dropped on, war news increasingly dominated the state's newspapers. But most editors also tried to record some of the everyday events taking place in their towns--the weather, crops, and social events, among others. These usually came in the form of brief and, sometimes, humorous editorial notes. In one July issue, the editor of the *Albany Patriot* described a recent barbecue he had attended. The dinner, held near the banks of the Flint River, was a splendid affair with plenty of good food including a couple of roasted geese. One of the geese, the editor noted humorously, bore a "striking resemblance" to

¹⁸"The Last of News," *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, 24 May 1864, 2. The *Courier* did not resume publishing until the following August, four months after the war had ended. *News-Courier*, 21 August 1865, 2.

his own dining saloon. However, since the guest had already been served and offered to the guests, he wrote, "we concluded to remain silent."¹¹ In another note, the editor described the summer weather and its effect on Albany's peak insect population.

These few August has been rainy, sultry, and pleasant. The nights are cool, and mosquitoes, flies [sic] and bed-bugs have been less turbulent in their nocturnal ravens over the unconscious victims. We have no fear of any kind of vermin, save the Yankees.

The *Albany Daily Intelligencer's* front-page column, "The City," began in 1843, provided brief news items and writings on local events, often written in a humorous style.¹² Regarding the process charged by merchants, "The City" remarked,

We have heard a great deal said of prices falling. We are not prepared to dispute the assertion, but will not decidedly assure them if they did fall, somebody picked them up certainly quick, for they appear to be as high as they ever were.

Another time the paper noted with obvious sarcasm that prices for goods in the city appeared to be going down at

¹¹"The Barber's," *Albany Patriot*, 7 July 1844, 2.

¹²*Albany Patriot*, 4 August 1844, 1.

¹³The writer of "The City" no doubt sent his readers to their dictionaries when he once described the column as a "mixture of wisdom, wit, nonsense and foolishness" as well as "conjectures, deductions, conjectures, and hallucinations."

¹⁴"our city," *Albany Daily Intelligencer*, 17 January 1844, 2.

the start of the year. A pair of pants that had sold for \$12.00 ten days ago, now were selling for a mere \$4.00.¹⁸ A constant complaint appearing in the column was the condition of Atlanta. During June heavy rains had turned the usually dusty streets into thick mud. The streets were in such bad condition, the writer of the column joked, that someone "would make an immense fortune running a line of steam street steamboats on our streets."¹⁹ In another column, "The City" complained, "No city of equal proportions of one-tenth the importance that Atlanta has assumed in our country, is so thoroughly neglected in all the necessary attentions which healthfulness requires." Whitehall Street was particularly bad, the writer complained. "It is said that even the rats have become disgusted with the filth and stench . . . and abandoned the neighborhood."²⁰ Not to be outdone in the humor department, the Atlanta Southern Confederacy reported that a large dog was killed in the city and the animal's skin was found in the possession of a local butcher. The newspaper warned readers that before buying

¹⁸"Our City," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 10 January 1864, 2.

¹⁹"The City," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 14 June 1864, 2.

²⁰"The City," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 2 July 1864, 1.

any message they should attach it with "a prolonged whistle or two."¹²

Atlanta Corps Detachment

During the last half of 1863 it had become apparent to President Jefferson Davis and other Confederate officials that unrest over the course of the war, combined with worsening shortages and inflation, was threatening to split the Confederacy. In Georgia, the president's operations of the war, most notably his implementation of the draft, had long been criticized by Vice-President Alexander H. Stephens and Governor Joseph E. Brown. At the same time, there were growing calls in various quarters for the Confederacy to negotiate peace with the North. Seeking to suppress disloyalty and enforce the draft, the Confederate Congress, at the request of Davis, authorized the president in February to suspend the writ of *habeas corpus*.¹³

Later that month, Stephens, Brown, and Linton Stephens, the vice-president's brother, concocted a scheme to nullify the power of the Confederate government and start a movement for peace negotiations. At a called meeting of the state legislature on March 10, Brown openly attacked attempts by Congress and the president to limit constitutional

¹²"Do you Not Remember?" Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 21 March 1864, 2.

¹³Wilfred B. Beards, Confederate Congress (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1964), 189-192; John B. Robbins, "The Confederacy and the Writ of *Habeas Corpus*," Georgia Historical Quarterly 85 (2011): 64-66.

liberties. Linton Stephens then proposed two resolutions: one condemning suspension of the writ and the other urging Davis to seek out a proposal for peace after every victory. The vice-president, an invited speaker, endorsed both resolutions during a ringing three-hour speech. It was a carefully staged presentation, but the three men could claim only a hollow victory. Although the legislature approved the resolutions, it did so with several conditions attached. Luskens also passed another resolution affirming confidence in President Davis and his administration.³⁰

Georgia's press for the most part angrily condemned the actions of Brown and the Stephens brothers. The *Columbus Times* called the governor a dictator, and the *Savannah Morning News* described his message as "the most dangerous fire-brand yet thrown in the Confederate camp."³¹ The *South Courier*, noting that some Confederate soldiers had condemned Brown's actions, said, "The fact is soldiers in the army, who have laid their all on the altar of the country, do not intend to suffer any contentious 'whipper snapper' rider of a hobby horse, to jeopardize a cause for which they have

³⁰Hamline, "The Confederacy and the Writ of Habeas Corpus," 76-77; Joseph E. Parks, *Joseph E. Brown of Georgia* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 261-262.

³¹As quoted in Griffin and Teleage, *Georgia Journalist*, 78.

suffered as such.¹⁷ One of the governor's strongest critics was the Savannah Telegraph which also obtained numbers of the public who supported him.

The message of Governor Brown is the ground work of a demoralization which has rallied in support of every disaffected and disappointed man in the country. Wherever you meet a grumbling, complaining and sore headed man, hostile to the government and denunciatory of its measures and policy in a grumbling, denigrating despectic who sees no hope for the country, bet, whipped himself, is trying to make everybody else feel as badly as himself, you will invariably find a friend, adviser and defender of Governor Brown.

The vice-president and governor had their usual defenders: the Atlanta Intelligencer, the Savannah Chronicle & Sentinel, the Wilmington Confederate Union, and the Atlanta Southern Watchman. "The way to whip the Yankees is not by a surrender of your personal rights, nor the sovereignty of your State to the Central power at Richmond," the Daily Intelligencer said in criticizing suspension of the writ of habeas corpus.¹⁸ In a similar vein, the Southern Watchman declared, "To say to us that we must place our liberties and lives at the entire disposal of Mr. Brown and trust to his forbearance and mercy and kindness, is to place us upon the level of the Negro. Nay, it places us beneath the Negro."¹⁹ The Chronicle & Sentinel quipped with

¹⁷"The Army Speaks," Rome Courier, 15 April 1864, 2.

¹⁸Savannah Daily Telegraph, 13 April 1864, 2.

¹⁹Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 18 March 1864, 2.

²⁰"A Good Master," Atlanta Southern Watchman, 4 April 1864, 2.

praise for Stephens, calling his speech a "noble argument in behalf of constitutional liberty." The editorial said of the speech,

It is characterized by great wisdom and independence. It sheds light over the confused current of public affairs. The tone is as high--and to borrow a French term, *prosaïque*--that one who reads it is refreshed. He takes heart once more. He sees the guiding light in the sky once more.⁶⁶

Fighting in Georgia

The Confederate Army of Tennessee, meanwhile, had spent the winter camped near Dalton and used the three months to recover from the dismal loss at Chattanooga. "Speedai," a soldier correspondent for the *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, noted in March that many of the troops had been outfitted with new uniforms and presented a "very fine appearance." "[O]ne can scarcely recognize in them that army which was hurled from Missionary Ridge dispirited and broken. . . ."⁶⁷ Such high spirits were evident later in the north when a late-winter storm left the north Georgia mountains covered with snow. The blanket of white turned many of the troops into little boys, and they held a mock battle that was described by several soldier correspondents in letters to their hometown papers.⁶⁸

⁶⁶"Speech of Hon. S.B. Stephens," *Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel*, 13 April 1864, 1.

⁶⁷"The Front," *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, 13 March 1864, 1.

⁶⁸Probably the best account of what would become known as the "great snowball fight" was provided by "Ondary" of

In general, however, the state's press searched for items to fill up their news columns during the slow winter months. With Sherman clearly intent on making Atlanta his goal, the Daily Intelligencer resorted to an old strategy, the steady story, to prepare readers. In an editorial, carrying the headline "Barbarity of the Federals," the newspaper related "tales" from Sherman's march through Florida, tales which it described as "winking in the extreme."

His track was marked by the scattering ruins of what were once happy and peaceful homes. The torch of the incendiary was applied to every town and village through which he passed and the whole state given up to the devouring element. But this was not the only act of barbarism recorded against him. We hear of innocent children being hurled upon the bayonets of his lined companies; this murder and incendiarism in the most appalling form were visited upon the people.

Meanwhile, a soldier correspondent with the Southern Confederacy described the hard times of trying to report on General Joseph E. Johnston's army. He complained about being snubbed at the army's headquarters by everyone from the assistant adjutant general to the orderly. Then there were the officers who wanted to know why the correspondent did not mention their particular regiment or brigade. Inevitably, the same officer who had snubbed the

the Columbian Times. "Special Correspondence," Columbian Times, 15 March 1864, 1.

¹⁸"Barbarity of the Federals," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 14 March 1864, 2.

correspondent would ask him confidentially "why do you never say anything about the general in your letters."²⁰

By mid-April, when the weather had improved, "Joe" at the Ross Cottage reported that preparations were being made by the army for a resumption of active operations. Commanders suspended all farlaughs and ordered visitors to the army's camp to leave for the year. The mood of the army, Joe reported, was marked by confidence and enthusiasm.²¹

The Union command had also begun making plans for the spring campaign. Ulysses S. Grant, who in February had been promoted to lieutenant general and placed in command of all Union forces, devised a strategy that called for the Army of the Potomac to concentrate on General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, while William Tecumseh Sherman, who had been made commander of Federal forces in the Western Theater, focused his attention on Johnston's army. Grant left the details of the campaign to Sherman, telling him only that he should "move against Johnston's army. . . break it up and get into the interior of the enemy's country as far as you can."²²

²⁰Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 9 April 1864, 3.

²¹"Our Army Correspondence," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 13 April 1864, 3.

²²War of the Rebellion: official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office) ser. 1, Vol. 20, pt. 2, p. 344.

Sherman's invasion force consisted of three armies under his single command: the 48,000-man Army of the Cumberland commanded by Major General George H. Thomas, the 18,000-man Army of the Tennessee commanded by Major General James B. McPherson, and the 14,000-man Army of the Ohio.¹⁷ Opposing him was Johnston's army with about 60,000 men organized into two corps commanded by William J. Hardee and John Bell Hood.

The Atlanta campaign began on May 3 when Federal skirmishers pushed back Confederate pickets near Tunnel Hill, Georgia, and advanced against Rocky Face Ridge. Sherman and McPherson's army on a roundabout march to cut off the Confederate army from the railroad line at the small town of Resaca, fifteen miles behind Southern lines. Alarmed to the Union advance, Johnston pulled his army out of Dalton and marched it back to Resaca. The battle of Resaca took place May 13-15 with Union troops making reported advances on the Confederate lines; Confederate soldiers turned back the attacks and then advanced on the Federals. But reports (later proved false) that the Yankees had crossed the Oostanaula River caused Johnston to withdraw from Resaca to protect his supply lines.¹⁸

¹⁷The North's Army of the Tennessee should not be confused with the South's Army of Tennessee. The North named its armies after rivers while the South named its armies after regions.

¹⁸Robert Connel, Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign, 1864 (Lawrence, Kan.: University of Kansas Press, 1961), 181-182.

The Daily Intelligencer's Assistant Editor Alexander S. Abrams, who had traveled from Atlanta to cover Johnston's army, provided a vivid, if somewhat exaggerated, description of the repeated charges by Union troops against the Confederate lines at Resaca.²⁵

The missile battle of the batteries poured over our line in an increasing stream, and in such numbers that the air seemed black with them. The sharp and musical whirr they sent was no longer heard, it was an angry and discordant imitation of a peal of thunder rolling along the clouds while the booming of the artillery and the bursting of the shells as they came flying over our line, formed a fire unopposed, perhaps, since neither first made war upon each other.

Although he gave the Federals credit for fighting with great spirit, it was not enough to overcome the bravery of the Southern soldiers, in the correspondent's view. The Confederates beat back several charges by Union troops. Abrams also revealed a fact that no doubt inspired many army commanders who saw it. He wrote that if the Federal forces had not fired too high, Confederate troops would have suffered fearful losses.²⁶

Unable to find a favorable defensive position after crossing the Oostanaula, Johnston retreated south eight

²⁵Abrams was a Louisiana native who was attending law school when the war broke out. He enlisted in the Confederate army and was captured at Vicksburg. After being paroled, he moved to Atlanta and began working for the Daily Intelligencer. "Maj. Alex S. Clair-Abrams, Longtime Assistant of State, Taken in Mesh at Resa Here," Florida Times-Union, 4 June 1871, 3.

²⁶"special correspondence," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 24 May 1864, 3.

miles to Adamsville. He withdrew again to Greenville where he hoped to trap Sherman, but Hood and Polk bungled the plan. With their line untenable, the Confederates retreated again, this time across the South River to Allatoona on May 18 and 19. Close behind Johnston was Sherman. In two weeks, the general had advanced more than half way to Atlanta suffering fewer than 3,000 casualties.¹⁷

Sherman made a quick trip to the Intelligence office, but was back with the army by the time it reached Allatoona. On the return trip he encountered problems in Cartersville when he failed to locate the officer to whom he had entrusted his horse. After discovering that his horse had been taken to Marietta by mistake, Sherman procured a guide which took him to the front.¹⁸

Sherman had difficulty explaining why the Confederate army had been constantly retreating for the past several weeks.¹⁹ Likewise back home, editors were trying to put their best face on the situation. Throughout the spring, they rarely used the word "retreat" in accounts describing Johnston's backward march; instead they euphemistically referred to them as "retrograde movements." In a June editorial, the Albany Evening asked for patience by readers, despite the steady backward march of Johnston's army. The

¹⁷Cwetch, *Decisions in the West*, 184-189.

¹⁸*Atlanta Daily Intelligencer*, 18 May 1864, 3.

¹⁹*Atlanta Daily Intelligencer*, 21 May 1864, 3.

newspaper said the general simply was "maneuvering for position" and "saving his men." In fact, it proclaimed Johnston's "movement from Dalton to Atlanta [and] comprises the world in strategy."⁴² A month later, with Sherman's army just across the Chattahoochee River from Atlanta, the *Fairfax* still was boasting of Johnston's achievement. The newspaper said, "Gen. Johnston has immortalized himself in his retreat from Dalton. No living man could have retreated an army the size of Johnston's, a distance of seventy-five miles, and kept the confidence . . . of his men as he has done."⁴³

The *Daily Intelligencer* replied to those who accused the newspaper of displaying Johnston's retreat and Sherman's threat to Atlanta. The paper quoted people who asked the paper's editor regularly, "Why do you publish such flattering opinions about the situation? You know as well as I do that Johnson is falling back, and that Atlanta is threatened; you are misleading the people by holding out to them hopes which will be dashed to the ground." The editorial went on:

Such men want us to write detailed news, and make them, as well as every other of our readers, uncomfortable. We will write an article which, we hope, may suit them. . . .
 Yes! the enemy like Panthers; the terrible, great big, hooped snakes . . . are thundering at our gates. Their cannon shots are echoing among the hills to the

⁴²"Georgia Front," *Atlanta Patriot*, 7 June 1864, 1.

⁴³"Georgia Front," *Atlanta Patriot*, 13 July 1864, 1.

Northward, their shells are screaming through the air. See the beautiful fires they are lighting up in the North of Georgia. The luring flames light the way to their victorious March to the very heart of the South. Can't you hear their shouts? Their yells, exultant and full of the vindictive fire and pride of successful soldiers? There! your horse is on fire . . . and the thunderbolts of hideous war are crashing about your decimated and abandoned South states. Your wives and children have fallen into the hands of a ruthless and savage foe. . . . Now see! Now and a thing it is to be a SOUTHERNER. . . .

Mr. Diggins, and all the rest of your lowering brood, does this picture please you? We hope so. We do not intend it for sensible, and reasonable people, who have a proper abiding faith in the certainty of our victory.⁴²

By May, Adams and Henry Waterson of the Augusta Constitutionalist were the only full-time Georgia correspondents covering the fighting in Georgia.⁴³ General newspapers, including the Southern Confederacy and the Chronicle & Sentinel, had soldier correspondents attached to the army in Georgia, but the overall quality of their reports was poor. With few correspondents in North Georgia during the spring, most of the state's newspapers were forced to use Confederate Press Association accounts or reprint stories from their exchanges. Many of these stories

⁴²"Long Facer," Atlanta Daily Challenge, 19 May 1864, 3.

⁴³The 26-year-old Waterson, who wrote under the pen name "Graps," was the former editor of the Chattanooga Rebel. The Rebel had been forced to flee Chattanooga after the capture of the city, and Waterson joined the Atlanta Southern Confederacy in 1862 as an assistant editor. After a few months with the paper, he resigned and joined General Johnston's staff as a scout. He also signed on with the Augusta Constitutionalist as a correspondent. Joseph Fessler Hall, Henry Waterson, Reconstruction Rebel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 41-52.

suffered from their own shortcomings. Correspondents reporting from the front had to deal with tightfisted censorship on all dispatches from the army headquarters. Military authorities also directed that control of censorship be taken away from the provost marshal and given to the inspector general who was far stricter in what he allowed through. In May, the Confederate Press Association's general manager traveled to the army's headquarters in an attempt to get daily press service restored. But the trip apparently accomplished little because most of the Press Association's dispatches over the next several weeks originated from Atlanta. Many of the stories used information from second-hand sources.⁶¹

By the end of May, Sherman's constant flanking had forced Johnston back to the town of Dallas. No Georgia correspondents apparently were present at the battles of New Hope Church and Pickett's Mill where the Confederates repulsed several Union attacks. As a result, newspapers were forced to use brief Press Association accounts of the fighting. Repulsed, Sherman resumed his flanking maneuvers west in an attempt to cut off the Western and Atlantic

⁶¹Anderson, *The South Reports the Civil War*, 128. Rudy F. Tucker, *The Press Association of the Confederate States of America in Georgia* (Master's Thesis, University of Georgia, 1970), 88. For complaints by a correspondent about the Press Association's "glaring misrepresentations," see *Atlanta Daily Constitution*, 7 June 1864, 3.

Railroad. Johnston, in turn, pulled back again to a series of low hills outside Marietta.⁴⁵

On June 14, the three Confederate commanders, Johnston, Leonidas Polk, and William Hardee, climbed to the top of one of the hills, known as Pine Mountain, for an inspection of their lines. While on the summit, a Federal battery opened fire on the mountain and a shell struck Polk, killing him instantly. Georgia newspapers, and Atlanta's in particular, mourned the loss of the "Fighting Bishop," as Polk was known. "To day is one of the saddest that Atlanta has seen during the war," said the *Southern Confederacy*.⁴⁶

On reporting Polk's death, Henry Wetherston recalled a meeting he had with Polk earlier in the campaign. The day before the Confederate army had retreated from Buena Vista, the general had spread out lunch on the ground and, noticing Wetherston standing nearby, offered to share the food with him. Wetherston initially declined, but Polk insisted. "I see from your hungry face that you have had no breakfast and assist upon it--there's quite enough for both of us." Wetherston then accepted the offer, but suggested they look for a safer place to eat. "Certainly, certainly that will be more agreeable," said the general as enemy shells flew overhead. Wetherston found a spot at the bottom of a hill

⁴⁵Coates, *Decision in the South*, 221-241.

⁴⁶"The City," *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, 14 June 1864, 2.

and the two men ate their lunch there. As they were finishing, a shell struck near them and showered them with debris. "Gough," Robertson quoted Folk as saying, "You're a nice fellow to send out after a wide place. I guess we'd as well move back to the front."⁴⁷

With the Federal army planting despair into Georgia, Governor Brown in May and June called out part of his state militia and sent them to Johnston's assistance. The mayor of Atlanta also requested that every able resident of the city report to the marshal for duty.⁴⁸ The press joined in the call to arms and urged every able-bodied man to help protect the state. They also sought to put down wild rumors being spread. "The report that Joe Brown is in command of the Army of Tennessee with Will Arp [the newspaper columnist and humorist] as Chief of Staff is unfounded," the *Columbus Times* stated.⁴⁹ Other papers did not mind helping to spread rumors about the conduct of Federal soldiers if it might help rally citizens. The town of Rome was "quaked," and soldiers "run mad in a drunken

⁴⁷ *Atlanta Constitutionalist*, 21 June 1864, 2.

⁴⁸ Employees of the city's newspapers organized the Atlanta Free Volunteers to aid in the city's defense. Some seventy-five editorial and business employees met at City Hall on May 15 to elect officers and pledge to "defend our homes at all hazards, and to the last extremity." "Atlanta Free Volunteers," *Atlanta Daily Intelligencer*, 18 May 1864, 2.

⁴⁹ *Columbus Times*, 4 June 1864, 2.

right over the place," the Kennes Daily Telegraph claimed with no basis in fact.⁸⁹

Throughout May and June, refugees were pouring into Atlanta from north Georgia. "Deal kindly with them," the Daily Intelligencer implored. "They are your kith and kin." At the same time, the city quickly was becoming transformed into a giant army hospital. The Daily Intelligencer began running daily lists of the wounded soldiers arriving at the city's hospitals. The newspaper also printed appeals by the Atlanta Hospital Association for fresh vegetables for the wounded and added its own editorial encouragement: "If the people in these portions of the state, remote from the army . . . could for a moment look upon the scenes that are daily exhibited in our midst . . . we know they would not need any urging to induce them to contribute freely."⁹⁰

By mid-June, the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer declared, "our city is in a state of siege." The editor of the newspaper complained that residents now needed passes to get through the military guards posted around the city. "We are certain they do no good, and only annoy those who have other business to attend to. . . ."⁹¹ The Northern

⁸⁹As quoted in T. Owen Bryne, Confederate Georgia (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 139.

⁹⁰Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 24 June 1864, 1.

⁹¹"The City," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 20 June 1864, 1.

Confederacy called attention to the conduct of some soldiers in the city. An editor noted sarcastically that a brigade armed with shotguns was needed to patrol the streets at night and gather up all the drunken soldiers. Also needed, he wrote, was a load of lumber to build a guard house for all those soldiers arrested in just one day.⁶¹

Five days after Polk's death, Johnston pulled back his army to a new line anchored by Kennesaw Mountain, four miles northwest of Marietta. Like Atlanta, Marietta had been transformed by the recent fighting. In June, the Albany Patriot's owner, J.M. Fears, who had traveled north with the Antislavery Reform Society, described a town where the effects of war were visible everywhere. Using the byline "V," Fears wrote, "Through the city may be seen night and day trains of wagons, caulkers, horses, cattle, sheep, wounded men on litters . . . and often ambulances coming in from the front with the groaning and dying." The Marietta Hotel had been turned into a hospital and a park on the town square was covered with wounded soldiers.⁶²

About the same time, it was evident that the constant fighting and fleeing that had characterized the Atlanta campaign so far was getting to the Augusta Chronicle's

⁶¹"Warred," Atlanta Southern Confederation, 18 June 1864, 2.

⁶²"Editorial correspondence," Albany Patriot, 30 June 1864, 2.

Anderson's correspondent, Henry Withers. He began a remarkably forthright letter to the newspaper by writing,

I am weary of playing the chronicle to a series of unimportant, yet more or less bloody operations, all terminating with a dreary list of casualties, dead results. The brilliant charge of Hood's Corps on Wednesday, and the fight in front of Hardee's lines on yesterday, present the same features. A great deal of gallantry, much loss of life, and no great advance the leading characteristic of each combat. To describe one would be a full description of all.²²

Sherman decided that he, too, was tired of his inability to meet Johnston head-on. On June 27, the general launched his army in an all-out attack on the heavily entrenched Confederate lines stretching from Kennesaw Mountain two miles to the east. Sherman fought against the lines at Kennesaw and threw the bulk of his army against the Confederate left. Fighting behind strongly fortified lines, Johnston's troops hurled back repeated Federal assaults during the day. Sherman lost more than three thousand men during the battle--the most so far during the Atlanta campaign--while Johnston suffered only about seven hundred casualties.²³

Withers was the only Georgia correspondent at Kennesaw and as most of the state's newspapers used a Press Association account of the battle, the story lacked much detail and its overall quality was rather poor.

²²"Historical Correspondence," *Atlanta Constitution*, 28 June 1864, 3.

²³Castel, *Decision in the West*, 343-348.

Meanwhile, Georgia's press, particularly the Atlanta newspapers, relied upon the good news from Sherman Mountain and boasted that Sherman's army was in disarray. "There is no doubt that Sherman's plans of conquest have been utterly thwarted. . . ." one editorial said. "He presumed on his size and weight to walk over the ground and occupy the Gate City without much resistance."¹⁷ The Southern Confederacy went so far as to declare boldly that Atlanta was "safer from the Federals than when his legions were aligned in front of Rockyface Ridge [outside Dalton]. In his present condition, twice as many veteran troops as he now commands would scarcely enable him to reach the goal of his ambition."¹⁸

Atlanta's Newspapers Flee

Just a few days after the victory at Sherman Mountain, however, Atlanta's newspapers reported that the Confederate army had fallen back from Sherman Mountain to defenses constructed along the north side of the Chattahoochee River. Many of confronting the Confederate army head on again. Sherman moved his army to the east and crossed the river on July 4. As a result, Johnston was forced to retire his army across the Chattahoochee the following day. For the first time, the Southern Confederacy admitted that Atlanta was in

¹⁷"The Position," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 3 July 1864, 1.

¹⁸"Sherman's Bold a Failure," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 19 June 1864, 1.

"imminent peril," but putting on a brave face, it said the city's capture "cannot be considered a foregone conclusion."⁴⁹ The competitor, the *Daily Intelligencer*, apparently lacked confidence in Atlanta resisting capture because sometime in mid-July its owners packed up the presses and supplies and moved the newspaper's office south to Macon. The *Southern Confederacy* eventually followed.⁵⁰

By this point, President Jefferson Davis had grown tired of Johnston's constant retreating. In early July he ordered his military adviser, Braxton Bragg, to go to Georgia to explore the possibility of changing commanders. Bragg did not reveal the reason for his visit and so Georgia papers raised no questions. Indeed, it was a major story when the Confederate Press Association announced on July 18 that Johnston was being replaced as commander of the Army of

⁴⁹"the defense of Atlanta," *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, 3 July 1864, 2.

⁵⁰The exact date when both newspapers fled Atlanta is difficult to determine. The last date of surviving issues of the *Intelligencer* published from Atlanta is July 28. The next surviving issue of the paper is August 3. That issue carries "Macon, Ga." on its masthead, but no explanation is given for the move. The date when the *Southern Confederacy* fled Atlanta is even more difficult to determine because only scattered issues of the newspaper during this period survived. After July 3, the next surviving issue of the *Southern Confederacy* is September 18. It, too, carries "Macon, Ga." on its masthead. At some point in the fall, George Ainsur and J. Henry Smith sold the *Southern Confederacy* to John C. Hedrick of Atlanta. Smith eventually became an assistant editor with the *Savannah Daily News*, while Ainsur joined General Nathan B. Forrest's cavalry as an aide. National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Volume II (New York: James T. White, 1913), 410; "J. Henry Smith Taken By Smith," *Atlanta Southland* 18 February 1900, 2.

Tennessee. His successor would be the aggressive Texas, John Bell Hood.⁴⁰

The removal of Johnston stirred up a considerable controversy in the army. Both generals had their supporters, although the case was widely criticized by the rank and file troops. Wettersen reported that replacing Johnston was "regarded by everyone as a most unjudicious act. Gen. Johnston possessed the love and confidence of his troops, and the idea of taking their head before he had closed his campaign startled both rank and file."

Surprisingly, Georgia's newspapers stayed out of the controversy for the most part. Most expressed admiration for Johnston but, at the same, encouraged support for Hood.

The city which Hood had been ordered to defend already had been virtually deserted, Wettersen reported in a letter to the *Suprema Constitutionalist*.

The actual entrance of the enemy could not more effectively dislocate the public and private affairs of the city than his appearance in its front already has done. An old friend would not recognize the once happy face. It has passed through the fiery furnace and come forth scorched and withered. Houses are deserted, gardens are left to their fate.

The streets are full of the rude trappings of an army. No place is quiet or untroubled by the stir of war. Such towns silent walls which but a month ago

⁴⁰Thomas Connolly, *Antony of Abury, The Army of Tennessee, 1812-1813* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), 413-415. Henry Wettersen described Hood as a "tall heavy man, with light blue eyes, and brown hair, a heavy suit of beard of the same color falling upon his breast and an expression of benevolent benevolence all over his open frontier face. He slumps a little from the use of his crutch, but moves about with ease." "Letter from Atlanta," 28 July 1862, 2.

mixed only with the tones of musical instruments and happy voices, and rolling waves and sweet language like the war.

Read had advocated more offensive action throughout the year's fighting. Just ten days after being appointed to command, he attacked the Federals at the bottom of Freshwater Creek and two days later, at the battle of Atlanta. Both days, however, the Confederates were beaten back and suffered heavy losses.⁶¹ The only Georgia correspondent to report the action in any detail was Felix Gregory de Fortaine. De Fortaine, who wrote under the pen name "Ferdinand," had spent most of the war reporting for the *Charleston Courier*, but had left earlier in the year to become owner of the *Columbus South Carolinian*. He had arrived in Atlanta the first week in July to report for his paper and the *Savannah Republican*.⁶²

Although de Fortaine had earned a reputation as one of the finest Southern correspondents of the war, his account of Freshwater Creek was misleading. He interpreted Sherman's attack as a splendid success, even while admitting that Confederate forces had suffered severe casualties. He also noted that a light march through Atlanta had created the

⁶¹"Letters from the Front," *Augusta Constitutionalist*, 30 July 1864, 3.

⁶²Samuel Carter, *The Siege of Atlanta, 1864* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973) 185-232.

⁶³*Savannah Republican*, 14 July 1864, 3. For background on de Fortaine, see Lindsey, *The South Reports the Civil War*, 51-52.

impression that the city was being evacuated, which had led to considerable vandalism by army people, including some Confederate soldiers. De Fontaine himself was a victim of the looting, losing all his belongings except the clothes he was wearing.⁸² Wetherston, who also filed a story, was outraged at the conduct of the troops who took part in the looting, calling them "coarsely rude in the garb of soldiers." The presser searched tried to prevent the vandalism but was overruled. Wetherston added, "The disgrace falls upon the army, upon the country, and especially upon the officers responsible for the discipline of these men as much as the thieves themselves. . . ."⁸³

Perhaps because he had lost his belongings in the looting, de Fontaine was not on hand to report the battle at Ezra Church on July 28. It was the third defeat in a period of eight days for Hood. No other Georgia correspondent was at the scene either and so the battle went unreported in the state's newspapers. Also unreported was the fact that in three battles since he had taken over command, Hood had lost more than 15,000 men during the most recent fighting, compared to only about 4,000 for Sherman.

⁸² *Memphis Republican*, 10 July 1864, 2. De Fontaine himself was a victim of the pillaging, losing all his belongings except the clothes he was wearing.

⁸³ "The Siege of Atlanta," *Augusta Constitutionalist*, 28 July 1864, 1.

After the battle of Fort Sumter, Sherman decided to lay siege to Atlanta and continued pounding the city with his heavy guns. "Outline," a correspondent for the Columbian Times, reported that the shelling had made Atlanta appear all but deserted. The only people seen on the street, he wrote, were an occasional resident searching for vegetables and a few boys selling grapes from under the cover of bomb-proof trenches. Although the bombing often caused fires, most were promptly extinguished by the city's fire department. General Hood maintained his headquarters in a cottage, formerly occupied by the head of the Confederate Press Association. The only mark distinguishing it as the headquarters was the battle flag flying from a white staff at the gate. "Outline" reported that Hood could frequently be seen on the balcony smoking his long-stemmed pipe.⁴⁷

The growing threat from the Federal army provided plenty of sport for the rumor mill. In late July, word reached Athens that Union troops were headed for the town. Some residents fled while local defense companies gathered to meet back the threat. Although no Federal troops were ever seen, the rumor disrupted the town's business, including getting out the newspaper. The Southern Banner reported, "The confusion of the week prevents us from giving the usual quantity of matter in this issue. All heads, from

⁴⁷"Special Correspondence of the Times," Columbian Times, 27 August 1864, 1.

Editor to [President's] devil, have been drilling in the different companies for defense, and performing guard duty."⁶⁸

Georgia's press used various means to deal with the increasing number of rumors, including state of laws. When real news was in short supply, the Albany Patriot occasionally turned to its more expert and reliable correspondent, known as "Grapevine." This correspondent, the newspaper succinctly noted in one issue,

starts from this city to Johnston's camp, thence through Sherman's line, into Lee's camp, then, dodging the skirts of Grant, it follows the Potomac into Washington, and there is not a movement made by either General, a speech made in the Yankee Congress, or a joke perpetrated by the Age (President Lincoln), that is not learnedly discussed the following evening in front of the post office in this city.

Meanwhile, few days passed without newspapers noting the death of a resident killed while fighting in the Confederate army. Captain Thomas England, the eldest son of the Columbus Enquirer's owner, died during fighting around Atlanta in July.⁶⁹ Peter Lloyd, a Columbus printer, also was killed in the same fighting.⁷⁰ Sergeant A.B. Gray, the

⁶⁸"The News," ALBANY PATRIOT, 17 July 1864, 1.

⁶⁹"Grapevine in Albany," ALBANY PATRIOT, 25 June 1864, 2.

⁷⁰The senior England had three sons, a son-in-law, and a grandson in the war. The son-in-law died at Gettysburg and the two sons both were wounded in fighting elsewhere.

⁷¹"Another Type Dead," COLUMBUS ENQUIRER, 18 August 1864, 2.

Emminger's correspondent "orderly," who was feared killed, was captured during the Atlanta campaign and sent to Camp Chase in Ohio.⁷¹

In the midst of the fighting during July, Sherman dispatched General George Stoneman and five thousand men around Atlanta to destroy the railroad line south of the city. But the cavalry force was blocked outside Macon by state militia commanded by Howell Cobb. Forced to retreat, Stoneman and seven hundred of his men were captured outside Macon on July 27 by Confederate cavalry.⁷² Newspapers proudly trumpeted the feat of military good news. The Atlanta Daily-Intelligencer declared:

The war which Sherman has lost by the capture of this expedition cannot be easily replaced, because it requires not only chosen veterans to operate raids, but they must also be desperate fighting men, who can bear sleeplessly and vigilantly the hardest campaigning and the utmost fatigue. These raids are all about, strong men whose iron heart and endurance are plainly marked on their villainous countenances.

The Macon Daily-Telegraph used the raid to describe alleged atrocities as the part of Union troops. The paper bitterly remarked:

Perhaps there was never a more systematic band of plundering thieves. . . . They entered private houses and stripped bottom . . . of rings and pins; broke open drawers and trunks; and stole silver plate of every description. In every farmhouse found quilts were

⁷¹"orderly beds," Columbus-Emminger, 26 August 1864, 3.

⁷²Carter, The Siege of Atlanta, 245-246.

⁷³"The Position," Atlanta Daily-Intelligencer, 8 August 1864, 3.

resisted. My escape day . . . committed more fiendish brutalities."¹¹

One objective of Stanton's raid had been to liberate Federal troops at Andersonville, the Confederate prison camp some fifty miles south of Suwan. Selected for its isolated location, Andersonville had opened earlier in the year to house prisoners removed from the Virginia camps that had become increasingly threatened by the Union army. But the number of prisoners soon overwhelmed the camp. By mid year, more than thirty thousand Federal soldiers were imprisoned there, and hundreds were dying every week because of the shortage of proper food and unsanitary living conditions.¹²

Perhaps because it did not want to reveal the camp's location, Georgia's press carried virtually no stories about Andersonville or the alarming mortality rate of prisoners living there. One of the very few stories appeared in the Albany Register after the publisher J.R. Fears visited the place that he correctly predicted was destined to become either "famous or infamous." The tiny hamlet of Andersonville, Fears noted, was little more than a water tank, a railroad depot, and a whiskey mill which was closed. The community was overwhelmed by the enormous prison compound nearby which held the "captured heroes of

¹¹As quoted in Savannah Evening News, 11 August 1864, 2.

¹²David Patch, History of Andersonville Prison (Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida Press, 1948).

prisoners." The compound, built near the slope of the hills, was scattered with small huts, lean-tos and other crudely built structures intended to ward off the weather. But the heat and rain were still taking their toll of prisoners, an all-together appropriate fate, in the view of Fears. Expressing no concern about the conditions of Federal prisoners, Fears noted that the mortality rate at Andersonville averaged thirty-five a day. Twenty-two men had died the day before. They would be buried, like all the others, "without coffin or shroud" in a large field near the stockade, he wrote.⁷⁷

Sherman Reports the Fall of Atlanta

In early August, Sherman slowly began moving his army around Atlanta in an attempt to cut off the Confederacy's supply lines to the city. On August 14, Confederate pickets discovered the Federal camps deserted, and Hood jubilantly concluded that Sherman had retreated. But he soon discovered the truth: Federal soldiers were south of Atlanta destroying the railroad line. On August 20, Hood sent two corps to Jonesboro, twenty miles south of the city, to prevent being cut off. The Confederates were repulsed with heavy losses, however.⁷⁸ While fighting continued the next

⁷⁷"Our Trip to Andersonville," Albany Enquirer, 18 May 1864, 3.

⁷⁸Among those wounded at Jonesboro was Alexander S. Brown, who had left the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer and re-enlisted in the Confederate army.

day, General Wood decided that he could leave his entire army he had no choice but to evacuate Atlanta on September 1.⁷⁹

"Bever," an occasional correspondent for the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, was the only correspondent for Georgia --and the entire Confederacy--to report the dramatic climax to the Atlanta campaign.⁸⁰ In a straight-forward account, he wrote that with the exception of some individuals, including soldiers who participated in looting, the evacuation was accomplished in good order. The army spent much of September 1 removing what ammunition and supplies it could carry. Large quantities of public stores then were distributed among the remaining residents and the troops who filed through the city as they were withdrawn from the defense lines. Many of the soldiers had expressions of sorrow on their weather-beaten faces, he reported. By midnight the great majority of the army had left Atlanta. The troops remaining burned the ammunition and other property left in the city. The conflagration and explosions could be seen and heard from miles away, "Bever" reported.⁸¹

⁷⁹Carter, Siege of Atlanta, 1994, 301-012.

⁸⁰Andrews, The South Against the Civil War, vol. 1. Like many of the correspondents whose reports appeared only occasionally, "Bever's" identity was never revealed.

⁸¹"Letter from the Georgia Front," Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 4 September 1864, 2.

Most of Georgia's newspapers did not get word of Atlanta's fall for at least three days. The state's delinquent carried Press Association accounts which were held up because of difficulties in getting in contact with the Press Association reporter near Atlanta. The P.A.'s account of the evacuation, dated September 4, begins:

All doubts about the fall of Atlanta are ended. It was evacuated on Thursday night and occupied by the enemy at 11 o'clock on Friday morning. Gen. Hood blew up his baggage wagons and burned his commissary stores, and drove off on the Milledgeville Road, leaving nothing in Atlanta but blood stained ruins. Yesterday our whole army was concentrating at Kennesaw's station on the Macon and Western Railroad.⁴⁰

The loss of Atlanta cast a pall in Virginia and even at the Confederacy.⁴¹ Writing from Richmond, Peter E. Alexander wrote that neither the surrender of Vicksburg nor the loss of Gettysburg had produced such a "painful impression" in the capital as the fall of the state city. Another correspondent for the Savannah Republican reported that Richmond authorities were concerned about the news on the morale of General Robert E. Lee's army. He reported that the news was communicated by "slow and torturing rumors" until the War Department finally made "a circumstantial confession."⁴²

⁴⁰"Atlanta Evacuated," Columbian Times, 5 September 1864, 2.

⁴¹Kennesaw, Battle Cry of Freedom, 734-735.

⁴²Savannah Republican, 11 September 1864, 2.

Georgia's press admitted in editorials that the fall of Atlanta was a disaster for the state--and the entire Confederacy. But trying to keep spirits up, they argued that the setback was far from hopeless. Typical was the Chronicle & Sentinel, which said of the loss,

It is a reverse--a serious reverse. It is true that we must expect such reverses, and those without hope and the despondent, alone expect victorious change. The true men are they, who arise from a defeat as brave as were determined than ever to conquer in the fight.

A few papers expressed grudging respect for Sherman's army and admitted that the advance to Atlanta was an impressive feat. The Daily Intelligencer wrote, "Sherman's penetration was deliberately, like a business or laboring man works. The most extraordinary inventive genius and the most experienced labor of men, have been applied to the machinery of his advance. . . ." With unusual candor, the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer's editor admitted there was little the Confederacy could do to stop Sherman moving through the heart of Georgia. Without major reinforcements, Georgians could only "sit and wring our hands in agony of suspense and anticipation whilst he advances. . . ."⁴⁰

⁴⁰"The War in Georgia," Atlanta Chronicle & Sentinel, 4 September 1864, 2. The Columbian-Times would have nothing to do with any feeling of despondency. "We have heard of such a type being made over the fall of a twenty year old town, three hundred miles in the interior of a State, as we and the Yankees are making over the evacuation of Atlanta." Columbian-Times, 7 September 1864, 2.

⁴¹"The Position," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 8 September 1864, 2.

Fighting in Virginia

Although the fighting in Georgia dominated the pages of the state's newspapers in 1864, news of what was happening in Virginia also appeared with regularity. Most of the news carried by the state's press originated from the Confederate Press Association or was reprinted from other Southern papers, especially the Richmond press. By 1864 the only Georgia correspondent in the field who was keeping up a steady stream of correspondence was Alexander of the Savannah Republican.⁸¹ Most of the state's soldier correspondents in Virginia had disappeared from the pages of their newspapers, silenced with no explanation in most cases.

The Confederate and Federal armies had wintered in Virginia a few miles apart on opposite sides of the Rapidan River. Grant, who had been made commander of all Union forces, crossed the river on May 4 in an attempt to bring Lee's army out of its trenches for a showdown in the area known as the Wilderness. Grant's movement had been anticipated, and Alexander had left Richmond for the town of Gordonsville. Arriving there, the correspondent heard that Federal forces were on the march. "T.H.A." scolded his

⁸¹In addition to the Republican, Alexander was reporting for the Richmond Dispatch and Savannah Advertiser and Register, as he had done the year before. Andrews, THE South Reports the Civil War, 284.

horses and galloped off in search of the probable spot where the two armies would meet.⁸⁸

The next day, Lee and Grant's armies collided in what would prove to be the beginning of a week of savage fighting. In a letter, Alexander predicted correctly that the two-day battle would take its name from the Wilderness where it was being fought. The correspondent described how Confederate troops had sprung upon Grant's right flank "like a tiger upon the side of an ox" and killed the Union march. Grant responded with repeated attacks on the Confederates' lines, but was repulsed. Alexander described the response of Confederate troops when Lee said he intended to lead them into battle himself. A Texas brigade argued against the general exposing himself unnecessarily and warned him they would "ship the fight" if he would go to the rear. Alexander also reported on the accidental wounding of General James Longstreet by his own troops as he was leading an attack.⁸⁹

The fighting resumed May 8 at nearby Spotsylvania Court House. On May 12, the Confederacy's flamboyant cavalry general, J.E.B. Stuart, was mortally wounded in fighting at Yellow Tavern. The following day, the two armies met again in what Alexander rated as "one of the fiercest battles of

⁸⁸Wardlaw, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 731-734; Richmond Dispatch, 15 May 1864, 3.

⁸⁹*Mobile Advertiser & Register*, 8 May 1864, 3.

modern times." Grant launched his attack early in the morning and for eighteen hours some of the war's most horrific fighting raged, especially at the famous Bloody Angle. The fighting was so close, "P.M.A." noted, that at times opposing troops had little more than the length of their muskets between them. In the literary style that had come to characterize much of his work, the Georgian went on to write, "The battle was truly joined and for nine hours it roared and hissed and dashed over the bloody angle and along the bristling entrenchments like an angry sea beating and chafing along a rock bound coast."⁸⁰

During the Battle of Spotsylvania, Union troops made assault after assault on the Rebel lines. Some Confederate correspondents remarked on the tremendous courage the Federals showed. But Alexander had another explanation. He wrote that some Union soldiers had been well supplied with liquor before they went into battle. Alexander cited as evidence the fact that many Union prisoners were intoxicated when they were captured.⁸¹ A better example of the correspondent's work appeared later in May while the troops rested from the savage fighting of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania. Alexander described how the troops relaxed one Sunday:

⁸⁰McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 729-731; *San Francisco Republic*, 20 May 1864, 2.

⁸¹Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War*, 361-362. *San Francisco Republic*, 1 June 1864, 2.

Some were reading their well-thumbed Bibles; some were industrious [sic] letters to the loved ones at home, to assure them of their safety; some were sleeping--perchance dreaming of the bloody work still remaining to be done, others were enjoying the music of the brigade bands, as they rehearsed. . . and others again were sitting under the trees, with their eyes closed, ears at home, listening to the word of life, as preached by those faithful servants of God, the hearty, zealous, self-denying chaplains of the army. As the army thus rested--its great heart quiet, its huge arms unstrung, its flank well skill--I could but reflect, and wonder as I reflected, that this vast machine, this mighty giant, this great locomotive, and immeasurable power, should be so terrible in battle, and yet so calm and gentle and docile in the hour of peace."

Only a few days later, that vast machine Alexander had described was back in action at the battle of Cold Harbor. Grant made several futile attempts to break through Lee's strongly entrenched army on June 30, and in so doing suffered terrible casualties, the worst repulse since Fredericksburg. Alexander reported that Union casualties in front of one Confederate division exceeded "anything that has occurred during the war." The battle was similar to Spotsylvania, he wrote, with the important difference that "our own loss is incredibly small." Alexander was on the mark. The Federal army suffered 7,400 casualties that day, compared to only 1,400 for the Confederates. What "P.M.A." could not have known was that Cold Harbor would prove to be Lee's last major victory in an all-out battle.¹²

¹²Richmond Dispatch, 30 May 1864, 1.

¹³McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 715-17n. *Mobile Advertiser & Register*, 17 June 1864, 1.

The shocking number of casualties in Virginia prompted one Georgia newspaper to take side at Grant. After Cold Harbor, the *Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel* called the general a "second Agila." The editorial went on:

He is a rare specimen of animal ferocity, of the brute savagery, ferocity and a blood thirstiness which characterizes the lion and the tiger. . . . He is utterly devoided of the ordinary feelings and sympathies of humanity . . . His heart, if he has ever had one is hardened into granite. . . . He exhibits a brutal indifference to the slaughter of his own troops. . . . Human life is nothing to him.

After the disaster at Cold Harbor, Grant changed his tactics and devised a plan to cut Lee's supply lines and force him out of his trenches. Grant's goal was to seize the town of Petersburg with the hub of railroads linking Richmond to the South. Despite having a far larger force, the general missed several opportunities to take Petersburg. Once the bulk of Lee's army arrived on June 18, Grant decided to lay siege to the city.⁸² As Grant moved closer to Richmond, the city's residents became more engrossed than ever with war news, the *Atlanta Daily Intelligencer's* Richmond correspondent wrote. "War has again become the all-absorbing theme to which religion, literature, politics, law, and legislation succumb," he wrote.⁸³

⁸²"The Modern Olympe," *Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel*, 18 June 1861, 2.

⁸³Abner Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative, Red River to Appomattox* (New York: London House, 1974), 427-448.

⁸⁴*Atlanta Daily Intelligencer*, 18 June 1864, 2.

Alexander remained in Virginia the entire summer to cover the siege of Petersburg. Within two weeks after the siege had begun, the correspondent reported:

Everybody has left, or is preparing to leave, who is able to get away. The houses, and even the woods and fields, for miles around Petersburg, are filled with women and children and old men who had fled from their homes. Some have provided themselves with tents; others have sought bush abodes, and others are burrowing under the trees. This is a sad tale for a town so distinguished for hospitality, refinement, and cultivated men and women.

In a later correspondence, Alexander described the effect the hot and dry summer was having on Petersburg and the surrounding area. With a fine eye for detail, he wrote:

Everything partakes of the color of dust--the woods, the fields, the corn, the grass, the sea, the horses, and the women. We breathe it, we sleep in it, we and even more in it. It is thicker than the darkness that overpread Egypt in the days of the Pharaoh; so thick indeed, that Gen. Butler from his lofty lookout will be able to discern but little else except dust. If there is no wind to blow it away, the dust raised by a solitary horseman is so quiet that it is impossible at the distance of a few paces to tell whether it is produced by a man, a horse, or a vehicle.

As summer turned into fall, both sides settled into a siege that would last for the remainder of the year.

Brown, Stephens, and Augusta's Gallies

After briefly passing following the fall of Atlanta, Hood began moving his army around the city in an attempt to sever Sherman's supply line and draw his army. No Georgia correspondents apparently were accompanying the army, as the

⁸⁷ Mobile Advertiser & Register, 14 July 1864, 2.

⁸⁸ Georgia Republican, 14 July 1864, 2.

state's press had to depend on the Confederate Press Association. But problems with this arrangement soon developed. For example, a Press Association story from late September or October 11 announced that four thousand Federal troops had been captured near Allatoona and Sherman's railroad line virtually destroyed. Three days later, after the story had been widely published by the state's newspapers, the Press Association was forced to announce that the report was entirely false and that Allatoona had, in fact, been the scene of Hood's first serious check since resuming his march.¹⁵

Hood continued marching his army north, and Sherman briefly followed over the same ground contested earlier in the year. Frustrated at his inability to catch Hood, the general then changed his plan. He sent General George H. Thomas and 42,000 men northwest to follow Hood while the remainder stopped near Kingston. Sherman reorganized his army into a right wing, under the command of S.O. Howard, and a left wing under the command of H.W. Slocum. General Sherman proposed to drive that his army march through the heart of Georgia to the coast, wrecking everything in its path. Although he would have no supply line and only twenty days of rations, Sherman believed his army could live off the Georgia countryside.¹⁶ The material and psychological

¹⁵Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 12 October 1864, 8; Andrews, The South Reminisces the Civil War, 467.

¹⁶Crossley, Aspects of Slavery, 439-444.

effect of such a campaign would be devastating, he argued. "If we can march a well-appointed army right through [Jefferson Davis' territory]," Sherman wrote Grant, "it is a demoralization to the world, foreign and domestic, that we have a power which Davis cannot resist. . . ."¹⁸¹

While Sherman was setting his plans for the state, the Georgia legislature convened in Milledgeville in the midst of a smallpox outbreak. Members considered moving the session to Savannah, Augusta, or Macon but the proposals were voted down, according to the Georgia Recorder. During the session, Governor Brown renewed his peace initiative. That time Brown, again supported by Linton Stephens, proposed a convention of all the Confederate states to formulate a peace proposal for presentation to the North. But supporters of the Davis administration proposed resolutions pledging the state's fidelity to the Confederacy. In the end, the legislature took no action on the governor's proposal and it died.¹⁸²

Most of Georgia's press strongly opposed Brown's plan. The Macon Telegraph and Confederate regarded the proposal as "impracticable." It would have required the states to declare their absolute sovereignty, an unlikely event, the

¹⁸¹War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies Series M128 1, Volume 35, Part 3 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1894), 648.

¹⁸²Bryan, Confederate Georgia, 87-88; Joseph E. Parks, Joseph E. Brown of Georgia (New Orleans, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 121-228.

newspaper said. "As for ourselves, we have neither the time nor inclination to run tilts with vindictive."¹⁸² The Willsboro Southern Recorder declared, "we are in the fight and we must carry it on to the bitter end, until we can close it with honor. It is not time for us to propose negotiations, or to ask for forbearance. The sword can be sheathed after victory."¹⁸³

But Brown, as always, had his staunch supporters among the press. In an impassioned editorial, the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer said,

Might it not put a stop to this devastating, devastating, horrid, ungodly war? If ever this war be terminated it must be by negotiation; it cannot be by the sword. What better mode of negotiation can be proposed than that the Governor propose?¹⁸⁴

But the governor's biggest supporter remained the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel--and with good reason. Brown had long been concerned about his lack of support from the state's press: By the summer of 1864, he had decided he needed a newspaper under his control in which to attack the Davis administration. He and vice president Stephens began secret correspondence about purchasing or starting their own paper.

Henry Cleveland, editor of the Augusta Constitutionalist and a supporter of the peace movement, had

¹⁸² Wagon Telegraph and Confederate, 4 November 1864, 2.

¹⁸³ "Peace Negotiations," Southern Recorder, 4 October 1864, 2.

¹⁸⁴ "The Governor's Message," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 4 November 1864, 2.

retitled Brown is sure that the newspaper's owner, James Gardner, would no longer give his latitude in publishing peace material). Cleveland told Brown that he believed Gardner would sell the Constitutionalist. Brown then wrote Stephens with the following suggestion:

Could not enough of this stock be purchased to control and keep the paper on the right line? I am satisfied the money now he raised on short notice to purchase half of the stock is addition to what he is in the right hands, if necessary by a little effort on the part of our friends. I can raise part of it here.¹⁰⁰

Before the end of June, however, stockholders forced Cleveland to resign from the Constitutionalist. And even though Brown had raised enough money to buy the newspaper, Gardner announced he was not interested in selling it.¹⁰¹

The governor then turned his attention to another Augusta daily, the Chronicle & Sentinel. In July, editor Nathan E. Means had bought controlling interest in the newspaper for eighty thousand dollars. Means was the Connecticut editor who had fled South in 1861 and become a minority owner of the Chronicle & Sentinel later that year. Although the governor's previous involvement in the purchase of the newspaper in 1864 is uncertain, the governor is believed to have put up security for the money borrowed by

¹⁰⁰As quoted in John E. Talanage, "Peace Movement Activities in Civil War Georgia," Georgia History, 7, no. 2 (Summer 1953): 194-195.

¹⁰¹Talanage, "Peace Movement Activities in Civil War Georgia," 194-195.

Morse.¹⁰⁰ Stephens' participation is even less certain, although his biographer has written that he definitely supported Brown's plans.¹⁰¹

Whatever the two men's involvement, they could not have had a better editorial friend than Morse. For the remainder of the war, the editor waged a relentless campaign to discredit President Davis and extol the virtues of Brown. Morse used two strategies in his campaign for peace: building up the desirability of peace while tearing down faith in the Davis administration. All the while, the editor took every opportunity to praise Brown as the only man willing to stand up to the wicked Richmond authorities.¹⁰²

During the two weeks that the governor's peace proposal was being debated, Morse published a remarkable series of editorials supporting the governor. In one, the editor called Brown a "wise and bold thinker" who like other leaders—Columbus, William and Luther, among others—incurred "the vindictive hostility of the ignorant and prejudiced."¹⁰³ The governor's message, Morse predicted in

¹⁰⁰Parks, *Joseph E. Brown of Georgia*, 187-204.

¹⁰¹Alexander M. Stephens of Georgia (Baton Rouge, La. Louisiana State University Press, 1962), 421-424.

¹⁰²Palmetto, "Peace Movement Activities in Civil War Georgia," 188.

¹⁰³"Governor Brown and His Associates," *Charleston & Sentinel*, 18 November 1864, 2.

another editorial, will "rank with the wisest and most patriotic State papers, which have appeared since the beginning of the war."¹¹⁸

The rest of Georgia's press recognized the damage Moren and his newspaper were doing to the Confederate war effort. The Secon Telegraph and Confederate called the Chronicle & Sentinel "that Northern journal with Northern sympathies."¹¹⁹ Joseph Turner, editor of Sechenek's monthly journal, the Courierman, pointed out that after the capture of Savannah there were actually three Northern newspapers in the state. He wrote,

The law in Savannah do us harm because they are not permitted to circulate through our state. The one in Augusta is rapping the foundations of our Government by skillful denegations, because our authorities have too much respect for freedom of the press to suppress it.¹²⁰

The criticism, however, had no apparent effect on Moren for he continued his attacks on the Davis administration throughout the year.

Also during the fall, one of the state's best-known editors and publishers ended his newspaper career. On September 19, Joseph Clesby sold the Secon Telegraph to Berry Finch, publisher of the Secon Confederate. Finch

¹¹⁸"The Governor's Message," Chronicle & Sentinel, 18 November 1864, 2.

¹¹⁹As quoted in Griffin and Tolson, Georgia Journalism, 84.

¹²⁰As quoted in Tolson, "Peace-movement Activities in Civil War Georgia," 241.

merged the two papers, publishing under the name, the Macon Telegraph and Confederate.¹¹⁵

The March to the Sea

On November 18 Sherman's army marched out of Atlanta for a new campaign against the state. Carrying virtually everything of any military or economic value, it left behind a city in ruins. The Atlanta Daily Intelligencer reported on November 18 that the Federal army was believed headed toward the state's capital, Milledgeville: "It is now evident that Sherman has inaugurated a winter campaign and that Georgia is the field which he designs to desolate. . . ."¹¹⁶

With the Army of Tennessee no longer in Georgia, the only organized force to oppose Sherman's army was the 3,000-member state militia and a cavalry force of 1,200 troopers commanded by Joseph Wheeler. William Hardee was named overall Confederate commander, but with such a small force there was little he could do to stop the Federal threat. Instead, Hardee used his men to fortify Savannah. Sherman sent his two divisions in different directions to make it appear that he could be moving against Macon, Augusta, or Savannah. The army covered about fifteen miles a day,

¹¹⁵William Herbert Wilson, "As the Telegraph Saw It: A Study of the Editorial Policy of the Macon Daily Telegraph (and Confederate, 1863-1865" (M.A. thesis, Emory University, 1944), 14.

¹¹⁶Carter, The Siege of Atlanta, 1864, 286-287. "From the Front," Daily Intelligencer, 18 November 1864, 1.

traversing the countryside. With only a small force in their way, it did not take Union troops long to reach Millidgeville, the capital. All the while, the state's newspapers could only guess where Sherman was headed. For more than a week, the fate of Millidgeville was uncertain.

News of what had happened to the capital emerged on December 1 when the *Merced Telegraph and Confederates* printed a letter from H.M. Green, publisher of the *Millidgeville Southern Recorder*. In a succinct, detailed account, Green reported how the Federal cavalry had engaged outside the capital on November 18, cut the telegraph lines, and rode through the town "raising havoc and exciting no little consternation and alarm." Two days later, Sherman's corps arrived in Millidgeville by way of Boonville, Madison, and Benton. Although provision wagons accompanied the army, the troops had been subsisting on what they could find along the way. "They spread desolation . . . taking everything in their way in the breadth of about twenty miles . . . corn, fodder, meat, flour, horses, mules, hogs, cattle, sheep, poultry of every description, servants that could be enticed off. . . ." Green wrote.¹¹⁷

While the Federal army was in Millidgeville the city was "one vast camp," Green reported. Fences were used for fuel, and garden and private ponds were mere paths for horses and men. The arsenal, magazines, and railroad depot

¹¹⁷

Merced Telegraph and Confederates, 1 December 1864, 1.

were burned, although the state house, governor's mansion, and courts were left standing, the editor wrote. Several churches were damaged, but only two private houses were burned. The presses and equipment of both the Confederate Union and the Southern Recorder were dismantled and hidden before the Union army arrived. But, Crow wrote, it would be some time before either office was operating again.¹²⁸

The Confederate Union resumed publishing on December 4 with the staff using a hand press to get the paper out. Employees had not been able to reassemble the cylinder press before resuming publishing. The Confederate Union said a Union general used the newspaper's office for his headquarters. The office was not damaged during the occupation, but several items were missing.¹²⁹ The Southern Recorder was not able to resume publishing until December 20. Crow wrote that the paper had lost its junior editor, who was serving with the state militia, and a Negro pressman, who had fled with the Union army.¹³⁰

The Confederate Union's first issue after suspending operation provided more details of the town's occupation. Most residents fled before the arrival of Sherman's troops. The newspaper noted. Those who remained, it alleged,

¹²⁸ News, Confederate and Telegraph, 1 December 1864, 2.

¹²⁹ "Sherman's Army in Milledgeville," Milledgeville Confederate Union, 4 December 1864, 2.

¹³⁰ "The Evacuees in Milledgeville," Milledgeville Southern Recorder, 20 December 1864, 1.

had to submit to all the insults, tyranny and oppression which the invaders saw fit to inflict. Nobody at every kind and in every degree was the owner of the day. . . . [W]e were told that every Southern man should feel that it was very expensive to be a rebel. Indeed, they seemed to think that every thing we had belonged to them, and that it was a very great price to hide any thing from them, and hiding did very little good, for they are the most experienced and shrewd thieves that we ever heard of, and knew exactly where to look for hidden treasure. A full detail of all the atrocities practiced upon the inhabitants of this place and the vicinity would fill a volume, and some of them would be too bad to publish. In short if an army of devils, sent out from the bottomless pit, were to invade the country they could not be much worse than Sherman's army.¹²¹

By December 13, the Greensboro Daily reported that most of the residents who had fled the city had returned. Still, a "death line" stillness pervaded the streets. The blackened walls of the penitentiary, arsenal, and depot were constant reminders of Sherman's visit. The streets and public squares were scattered with private papers and public documents dumped out of buildings by the Union troops. The State House remained "bare deep" in papers and all the building's windows needed repair.¹²² Still, the Greensboro Daily admitted, the destruction could have been worse. And it called upon residents to help one another. "It will not do to turn quickly away from a neighbor, with the reply to his appeal, that you are as bad off as he," as

¹²¹"Sherman's army in Hillsborough," Hillsborough Confederate Union, 4 December 1864, 1.

¹²²"Our city," Hillsborough Confederate Union, 17 December 1864, 2.

editorial implied: "Many see this to help others, and it is their duty in this solemn hour of trial to do so."¹²³

North of Milledgeville, near the towns of Clinton and Gordon, the Federal wing under the command of General Seward also was wrecking the Georgia countryside: "Everything has been swept as with a storm of fire," the MACON DAILY TELEGRAPH AND CONFEDERATE reported. "The State of Clinton is in ashes. The whole country around is one wide waste of destruction."¹²⁴ A letter writer to a Savannah newspaper remarked, "Many of us are utterly ruined, hundreds without anything to eat, their cattle and hogs killed; houses and ruins taken off . . ."¹²⁵ Sherman's army was not the only one accused of committing outrages. General Joseph Wheeler's Confederate cavalry was accused of stealing and destroying private property. In an editorial, the SAVANNAH DAILY MORNING NEWS declared that Wheeler had "demonstrated to every man in the Confederacy, except the President and General Bragg that he is not capable of commanding 18,000 men."¹²⁶

¹²³"The Duty of the Hour," Milledgeville Confederate Union, 12 December 1864, 2. Most historians agree that Union troops, for the most part, treated Milledgeville responsibly, although they certainly enjoyed themselves. One group of soldiers had a mock session of the legislature which repealed the state's ordinance of secession. Kenneth Coleman, ed., A History of Georgia (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1981), 265.

¹²⁴Quoted in Columbian Times, 20 November 1864, 2.

¹²⁵Savannah Morning News, 2 December 1864, 2.

For the most part, however, the state's newspapers were frustrated at their inability to get reliable news of what was happening in the state. The Athens Southern Watchman declared, "The army of Sherman is believed to be somewhere in the limits of our State, though we must confess our inability to locate it with great precision."¹²⁷ Said the Killedgeville Confederate Union, "We are almost as ignorant of army movements at Kithwood, Seneca and Newville, as if we had lived in Mexico."¹²⁸

At the same time, some members of the press tried to boost morale by portraying Sherman's march through the state as little more than a retreat. After the capture of Killedgeville, the Killedgeville Southern Recorder claimed "it is indisputably proved" that Sherman's march "was not a triumphant march, but a retreat to avoid starvation" after supplies had been cut off by Hood's army.¹²⁹ The Augusta Constitutionalist compared the march to the business of Sisyphus in which, like the ancient Greeks, the unhappy

¹²⁷ "Sherman's Marching News," 1 December 1864, 3. After repeated reports of Sherman's retreat, the Inspector-general investigated the charges. The report defended Sherman's command from charges of desertions, but said the general did not enforce proper discipline over his soldiers. Bryan, Confederate Georgia, 171.

¹²⁸ "Sherman's Army," Athens Southern Watchman, 14 December 1864, 3.

¹²⁹ "The Military Situation," Killedgeville Confederate Union, 17 December 1864, 3.

¹³⁰ "Sherman's News," Killedgeville Southern Recorder, 20 December 1864, 3.

general was trying to escape to a secure spot on the coast.¹²⁸

The Capture of Savannah

After marching more than two hundred and fifty miles, Sherman's army arrived outside Savannah on December 18. However, Confederate forces were strongly entrenched and had flooded the river fields, leaving only five narrow causeways as approaches to the city. Three days later, Federal troops captured Fort McAllister on the Ogeechee River below Savannah; the fall of the fort opened river communication with the Union fleet and meant that Savannah was doomed. On December 22 Confederate troops left the city and marched into South Carolina. Fleeing the city with them were James M. Speed, editor of the *Republican*, and William T. Thompson, editor of the *Burning Cross*.¹²⁹

Charging Union troops marched into the city early in the morning of December 21 and raised the United States flag over the City Hallways. The troops found the last issue of the *Savannah Republican* published by Speed. Before leaving the city, the editor had arranged for the newspaper to appear on the day of Sherman's entrance into the city. "Under the fortunes of war we today pass under the authority

¹²⁸As quoted in Andrews, The South Reports the Civil War, 219.

¹²⁹Alexander A. Lawrence, A Friend for Mr. Lincoln: The Story of Savannah from Secession to Sherman March, 96; Andrews Press, 1961), 171-214.

of the Federal military forces," a story narrated. It advised residents to remain indoors and to conduct themselves in a manner as to win the admiration of a "superior foe."¹²⁰

Upon arriving in Savannah, Captain Moses Sumners and several Union printers found the presses of the Savannah News in working order. On Christmas Eve the first issue of a new Savannah paper appeared, the Daily Loyal Georgian. The newspaper's sentiments were clearly stated on the masthead: "The Union, It Must and Shall be Preserved." In his exultation, Sumners wrote that since Savannah would remain under Union control, "It has been deemed appropriate to publish a loyal newspaper through which the Union sentiments of the army and navy, as well as residents of the city can find a channel of communication with each other." Sumners went on to promise that the Loyal Georgian would make every effort to "envelope the latent Union sentiments" which he believed existed in the hearts of many Savannahites.¹²¹

The first issue of the Loyal Georgian was a curious mix of Union and Confederate news. The newspaper shared the news of the Federal victory at Nashville. It also announced that a Confederate blockade runner had been captured. On inside pages, however, advertisements announced plantations

¹²⁰As quoted in Lawrence, A. Fremont for Mr. Lincoln, 218.

¹²¹Daily Loyal Georgian, 24 December 1864, 1.

and Negroes for sale. There was even a directory of top Confederate officials.¹³⁴ Two days later, General Sherman made it clear what he expected from newspapers published in Savannah while the city was under Federal occupation. On December 14, the general issued "Special Field Order No. 143," a portion of which established that,

Not more than two newspapers will be published in Savannah, and their editors and proprietors will be held to the strictest accountability, and will be punished severely in person and property for any libelous publications, malicious matter, promulgation news, exaggerated statements, or any nonsense whatever upon the acts of the constituted authorities; they will be held accountable even for such articles though copied from other papers.¹³⁵

On December 18, Sherman announced that the Loyal Georgian would be merged with the Savannah Emancipator, which would be renamed under "the loyal auspices" of J. E. Hayes, a former correspondent with the New York Tribune, who had been reporting from Sherman's army throughout the Georgia campaign. The equipment of the Daily Star was moved into the Emancipator's office, and on December 19 the first issue of the "new" georgian appeared in Savannah. In a four-page notice, Hayes appealed to federal soldiers in the city to subscribe and to buy subscriptions for friends and family

¹³⁴The editor explained that to fill out the paper he had been forced to use "either . . . out of place in a Union paper. He said readers might be caused to read examples of what a Confederate editor published. Daily Loyal Georgian, 24 December 1864, 1.

¹³⁵The War of the Rebellion: The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I, Volume 44 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1880), 313.

in the North where the newspaper would be a "necessity."

Wayne noted that he did not expect subscribers from permanent residents of the city anytime soon.

It will require time to teach the rabid rebels of Savannah their fatal error, and as slight very catopally be expected of people so closely allied with the interests and success of Jeff Davis's wicked rebellion will not patronize or encourage in any way, representatives of such an infamous Association about as the Tribune, if they can help it. This class forms quite a large element in the resident population of the city of Savannah and as long as they can purchase Copperhead or Southern rebel journals . . . whose columns they can constantly draw a plentiful supply of ammunition, we need not expect any assistance from them.¹²⁶

While Savannahans were learning to cope with life in a city occupied by the enemy, residents of Atlanta and other parts of the state spent December trying to put their lives back together. The Daily Intelligencer, which had returned to Atlanta during the month, published a front-page letter from "Penn," who described the scene in nearby Marietta, his hometown. The town itself was ravaged, the Georgia Military Institute lay in ruins, and the Western & Atlantic Railroad badly damaged. Elsewhere around the area, he reported, the scene was much the same. "Penn" concluded his letter, "It is indeed heart rendering to think of the past condition of this country, and now to look upon its ruins."¹²⁷

¹²⁶Savannah Republican, 27 December, 1. Wayne delighted in explaining that the Republicans's former editor had fled the city, in his words, 'to engage the youth of an insalubrious strip, whom they delight in vilifying, while safely ensconced in a city beyond range of their guns.'

¹²⁷Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 17 December 1864, 2.

Conclusions

Like the rest of the state, by the end of 1864 many of Georgia's newspapers were in ruins. Editors who had once proclaimed the inviolability of the confederacy had witnessed first-hand the sight of Union forces. Finding themselves in the path of Sherman's troops, some newspapers had been silenced during the year, although a few resilient editors found a way to continue publishing. The courage they showed in continuing to publish was admirable, but it must be noted that editors also frequently let their readers down during the year. More than any other year of the war, the news that appeared in many papers during 1864 often was inaccurate, misleading, and in some cases, disingenuous. Editors also no doubt hurt words by their participation in the controversies that erupted between Governor Brown, Vice President Stephens and the Davis administration over the peace efforts and the writ of habeas corpus. None of the words printed were as damaging as those penned by the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel's editor, H. D. Kiser, but they nonetheless undermined the president's authority in the state and hurt the Confederate cause.

CHAPTER 7
"IT IS FOOLISH TO TALK ABOUT FURTHER RESISTANCE"

Georgia

Four years after Georgia had elected to leave the Union, the state's newspapers were in disarray. General William T. Sherman's campaign through the state had been a devastating blow to a press already reeling from financial difficulties, editorial shortages, and manpower problems. Many editors had been forced to flee from the Union army, were not to return to their presses until after the war. Those still publishing recognized that the Confederacy was in deep trouble. Yet they urged their readers to continue the desperate struggle. Although no one knew it at the time, one more season of fighting lay ahead--and with it more drastic changes for Georgia's newspapers.

A Season of Discontent

With the reversed Republicans in the hands of an unfriendly editor, correspondent Peter W. Alexander decided it was time to return to Georgia. In December, Alexander left on a month-long trip home, reporting along the way for the Richmond Dispatch and Mobile Advertiser & Register. Alexander was shocked by what he called the "deplorable state of demoralization" which was gripping the South.

Throughout his trip, Alexander heard repeated criticism of the Confederate administration and its conduct of the war.¹

The same state of affairs was evident in Georgia, and for the first time since the war had begun, real pessimism was creeping into newspaper editorials. The Columbus Daily Sun said it would be insulting people's intelligence to proclaim that "all is well." "The prospect is rather gloomy. . . ." an editor wrote, "but it is not desperate."² And the Augusta Constitutionalist said, "In taking a sweep of the field, unless we fortify ourselves by reason and thought, despondency most likely would take possession of us."³

There was good reason for the despair. By 1864 the Confederacy was on the verge of collapse. Soldiers deserted the army in increasing numbers and the conscript bureau was unable to find replacements. The government's finances were in shambles with Confederate script virtually worthless. Citizens roundly denounced the government for the military defeats, the failure to stem the tide of inflation, and charges of imprisoning warth and conscription officers. The situation was the same in Georgia. Sherman's march through the state seemingly had taken the fight out of most

¹Richmond Dispatch, 4 February 1864, 2.

²"The Prospect," Columbus Daily Sun, 14 December 1864, 2.

³"The Situation," Augusta Constitutionalist, 24 December 1864, 2.

accidents. Thousands of people in the path of the march faced the task of rebuilding their lives. They were ready for the war to end.⁴

As the new year began, the Army of Northern Virginia was the Confederacy's only substantial force in the field. Robert E. Lee's troops received most of their supplies from the Carolinas, many of which arrived from roadside farmers getting into Wilmington. The North Carolina town on the Cape Fear River was protected by Fort Fisher, a massive L-shaped structure, built of sand and dirt over a log framework. In early January, Ulysses Grant ordered an artillery barrage on the fort, followed by an infantry assault. After two days of heavy fighting, including a barrage of eight hundred tons of shot and shell, the Federal force broke through, capturing the fort and its garrison.⁵

Alexander traveled along the North Carolina coast during his trip home to Georgia and reported on the fighting at Fort Fisher. In several reports from Wilmington describing the fighting, Alexander displayed the exaggerated statements but also the fine detail that his writing had so often contained. In one account, he wrote, "The bombardment

⁴T. Cress Bryson, *Confederate Georgia* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1963), 183-184; Neil Irwin Wiley, *The Road to Appomattox* (Memphis Tenn.: Memphis State College Press, 1938), 70-71; Henry M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation, 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 124-125.

⁵James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965), 119-121.

of Fisher was the harvest and flannel to which any fort or town was ever subjected. The front faces of the fort are impregnable from bottom to top, and the ground and rear is covered with shells and torn into great pits and gullies.⁴ Fort Fisher would prove to be the last campaign Alexander escaped. After spending more than three years covering the deadliest conflict in American history, the Civil War had ended for Alexander.⁵

The loss of Wilmington encouraged some talk of peace. At the encouragement of other Southern leaders, President Davis appointed a three-member Confederate commission that included Vice President Alexander H. Stephens to meet with President Abraham Lincoln and Secretary of State William L. Seward and discuss possible terms of peace. The two sides met near Hampton Roads, Virginia, on February 3, 1865. The negotiations broke down upon Lincoln's insistence on "unconditional surrender" by the South and the restoration of the national authority throughout all the states.

⁴Robbie Lieberman, *A Soldier's Journal*, 12 January 1865, 1.

⁵Alexander apparently did not return to Savannah, but instead traveled to Europe where he discussed continuing as a correspondent with the editor of the *Telegraph and Confederate*. In April 1, the newspaper announced that Alexander had been employed as a correspondent for the newspaper and that he had left to cover the fighting in Virginia. However, no correspondences from Alexander ever appeared in the paper. After the war, Alexander resumed his law practice although he later became a co-owner of the *Telegraph*.

The Confederate peace commissioners returned with nothing to show and proclaimed outrage at Lincoln's demands.⁸ Georgia's newspapers took their cue from the Confederate officials. "Resistance - Revolution - Defiance - Determination - and Self-Denial should be our watchwords hereafter," proclaimed the Wilkesville Southern Recorder. "Annihilation in preference to dishonor and voluntary slavery."⁹ The Atlanta Southern Confederacy expressed a similar sentiment saying, "We can achieve our independence; we can obtain peace, but not from Lincoln, and the hope of doing so might as well be banished; for none but willows, paltroons and traitors will accept any peace that he will give."¹⁰

Throughout the early months of 1864, the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel's controversial editor, R.B. Moore, continued his calls for peace. In an editorial he wrote, "There is an earnest desire in the hearts of the Southern people to escape the horrors of a protracted war, if the struggle can be brought to an honorable termination. Though has been accomplished to illustrate the heroic qualities of

⁸Wardlaw, Little Coy. of Freedom, 421-424.

⁹"The Crisis," Wilkesville Southern Recorder, 14 February 1864, 2.

¹⁰"The Result--The News," Atlanta Southern Confederacy, 7 February 1864, 2.

our people."¹¹ At the same time, the editor continued his attacks on the Davis administration, repeating the theme that the president had created a military despotism. "Open his head, and that of his troops to compass, nests broken faith, violated oaths, and an almost ruined country," was editorialized denigrated.¹²

Increasingly, others members of the Georgia press criticized Horne for his attacks on the president. The Augusta Constitutionalist said that in attempting to weaken the Davis administration, Horne "steps short of nothing that is unmanly, ungentlemanly, or untrue." "Thank heaven," the newspaper said, such attacks did not come from a Georgian or even a true Southerner, but from a Connecticut man.¹³ Horne responded by proclaiming his rights to criticize the government:

We shall continue to criticize the acts of those elected to administer our government as boldly in the future as in the past. . . . If this be treason to the

¹¹"a convention--its powers," *Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel*, 18 January 1863, 1.

¹²"Military Despotism," *Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel*, 28 January 1863, 1.

¹³"Representative Unbecoming," *Augusta Constitutionalist*, 22 January 1863, 2. Horne also drew considerable criticism from newspapers outside Georgia. John Forsyth, editor of the *Mobile Register*, called him "a viper in our bosom who should be driven north." He also signified his willingness to fight a duel with Horne if there was no Georgian to protect the state's honor from this "meddlesome Yankee." As quoted in S. Carter Andrews, *The South Begins the Civil War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 123-124.

opinion of our opponents, they are at perfect liberty to make what they can out of it.¹¹

At the same time, another heated debate was taking place regarding the use of slaves as soldiers in the Confederate army. The idea was not new. In January 1862, General Patrick Cleburne had proposed recruiting an army of slaves whose masters would be guaranteed their freedom after the war. Although many of the commanders in Cleburne's division endorsed his proposal, it proved extremely controversial within other parts of the army, and the general was ordered to cease discussing the matter before it became public. But as the Confederacy's fortunes worsened, the idea was broached again later in the year. The governors of seven states, meeting in a conference, urged the imprisonment of slaves for whatever "public service" as might be required. In November, President Davis also proposed the purchase of 40,000 slaves as laborers with the promise of freedom after they had rendered faithful service.¹² Georgia's editors almost unanimously rejected the proposals, branding them as dangerous. Said the Willedgewood Southern Recorder on recruiting slaves, "A

¹¹"Treacherous Treasures!" Augusta Chronicle & Advertiser, 2 February 1862, 2.

¹²Robert F. Durkin, The Army and the Black: The Confederate Debate on Emancipation (New York, N.Y.: Longmans Green University Press, 1971), 83-142.

will never do to be brought down to that level. We should be humiliated to think so."¹⁴

The debate over the use of slaves continued into 1863. Opponents still remained in the majority among the state's press. Typical was the *Millersville Confederate Union*, which said, "We are utterly opposed to the proposition. If it be done, slavery is virtually abolished in these Confederate States, and no power, under heaven, can resurrect it."¹⁵ But a few newspapers, such as the *Augusta Constitutionalist*, changed their minds on the issue. The South had proven that negroes would be good soldiers, the editor argued. The goal of the Confederacy was independence, and "if the Negro stands in the way of this independence, let him go."¹⁶ General Lee eventually came

¹⁴"Slaves for War Purposes," *Millersville Southern Recorder*, 15 December 1861, 2. The strong feelings on the issue was evident on the pages of the *Atlanta Daily Intelligencer*. On September 29, an editorial in the paper supported enrollment of former slaves. It said the Federal army had proven that negroes would fight as soldiers. The South was embroiled in a "fearful life and death struggle," the editorial argued, and all able-bodied men, black or white, were needed. "Negro Soldiers," *Daily Intelligencer*, 29 September 1864, 2. The next day, in a front-page note, editor Shreve said the editorial had been written by an associate and claimed that the newspaper could not support enrolling slaves. "If we cannot win our independence without imitating the Yankee nation in the use he makes of the negro, we are in a worse condition than we believe we are." "Negro Soldiers," *Daily Intelligencer*, 30 September 1864, 2.

¹⁵"Negroes in the Army," *Millersville Confederate Union*, 2 March 1863, 2.

¹⁶"We Must Use the Negro or the Enemy Will Use Him Against Us," *Augusta Constitutionalist*, 2 January 1863, 2.

out in support of marching slaves, and the Virginia legislature passed the own resistance law. Two companies of black soldiers from the state later were organized, but they never saw action.¹⁸

Despite the many problems during the Confederacy, editors encouraged Georgians to continue the struggle. Most of the editorials repeated now-familiar themes of perseverance and sacrifice. The *Atlanta Daily-Intelligencer* said,

we could not expect in a contest like the one we are engaged in that we should never meet with disaster or defeat. The wonder is, under all the circumstances, with the world against us, that we should have succeeded as well as we have. . . . This is no time to lie down at the foot of the mountain, under the delusion that the heights cannot be overcome, but with all the energies we possess as a free, united people, we should press forward, sacrificing every private interest for the public good. . . .¹⁹

The *Augusta Constitutionalist* began carrying a quote from British statesman Edward Burke at the top of its editorial pages: "To submit to sacrifice--to stimulate to exertion--to shake dependency--to divert from untimely occupations--are stern but useful duties to be discharged in gloomy times."

Georgia's Tattered Newspapers Struggle

While the rest of Georgia's remaining newspapers struggled, the press in Union-occupied Savannah generally

¹⁸Hardee, *The Gray and the Black*, 368-369.

¹⁹"constancy, Endurance and Perseverance," *Atlanta Daily-Intelligencer*, 18 March 1863, 1.

was thriving. In January the Republicans gained a competitor, the Savannah Herald, which had moved into the old offices of the Savannah Morning News. Publisher S. W. Mason was a Union sympathizer who had been publishing a Federal army newspaper, the Palmetto Herald, at nearby Fort Myles, South Carolina.²⁰ He announced in the first issue that the Herald had been established as the "rival" of the News, "a five-cent sheet with a well-stocked office."²¹ Mason apologized for the lack of local news in the first issue, but said the staff had been busy putting the office and press in proper working order. On January 11, he merged his Fort Myles newspaper with the Herald. In that issue Mason announced:

we shall make this as we made the Palmetto Herald, a newspaper for the publication of all such general news as is not contraband. . . . We propose to exclude politics as out of our province; but where we see, editorially, or any other way aid the government of the United States, or encourage its army and navy in their glorious work, we shall do.²²

The Herald and Republicans began on small, four-column sheets, but both expanded as better equipment and more

²⁰Lister is known about the Palmetto Herald except that it had been publishing about two months before merging with the Savannah Herald. Only one copy of the Palmetto Herald is known to exist. Nelson Lee Bradley, *Georgia Journalist of the Civil War Period* (Athens, Tenn.: George Peckley College, 1940), 73.

²¹*Savannah Daily Herald*. 1 January 1863, 3.

²²*Savannah Daily Herald*. 11 January 1863, 3.

manuscript was secured.¹⁴ The *Republican* published seven days a week while the *Herald* came out daily except Sunday. The *Republican* initially was published in the morning and the *Herald* appeared in the afternoon. But by March both newspapers were publishing two editions a day. With access to paper brought to the city by ship from the North, both newspapers published four pages in most issues. Page one was devoted to national news, most clipped from other newspapers. Page two had editorials and local news. Page three contained more national news, military updates, legal notices, and advertising. Page four contained advertising entirely.

But with no telegraphic communication to Savannah, both newspapers depended heavily on Northern newspapers, delivered by ship, for news of the war.¹⁵ The *Herald* and *Republican* also gave plenty of space to stories critical of the Confederacy's conduct of the war, which first appeared in such newspapers as the *Richmond Dispatch* and *Charleston Mercury*, critics of the Davis administration. But while the *Herald* and *Republican* relied on other newspapers for news outside Savannah, neither ignored the events happening in

¹⁴ Paper and equipment problems plagued both newspapers for the remainder of the war and for several more months. The *Republican* was forced to print on brown paper for several weeks in March and April. "The *Republican* to its Friends," *Savannah Republican*, 27 April 1868, 2.

¹⁵ Telegraphic communication in and out of Savannah did not resume until June 1863, more than a month after the war ended.

Savannah. Little happening in the city appeared to swamp the notice of the Herald and Republican. They announced ships arriving at the city's docks and new guests staying at the Palmetto House, Savannah's finest hotel. They reported the election of officers for the Savannah Typographical Union and the Fire Department's Art, Hook, and Ladder Company. And when Queen Victoria appointed a summer for Savannah, the news appeared in both newspapers.

Court and crime news appeared regularly in the Herald and Republican. Virtually every day, the newspapers reported cases heard by the city's two greatest courts. In January, the Herald reported that police had broken up a "house of ill fame," although "many others" still were left in the city. The next month, the Republican printed the news that an army guard in the city shot another Union soldier who had refused his order to step. The Herald also reported the escape of three prisoners who removed the wooden planks from their cell, tunneled out some seven feet, and then climbed over the jail wall.

The two newspapers also tried to help citizens deal with the problems of daily life in a city occupied by the enemy. Announcements were made telling where relief supplies from the North were being distributed and where vaccinations were being given for smallpox. Companies of buildings left vacant were advised they had to pay rent to the federal government. Residents were urged by the

authorities to report cotton hidden in homes. Private citizens also were warned repeatedly that carrying firearms was illegal.

But the editors of the Harold and Argyllian did not put all their energies into reporting. The quest of molding public opinion also was high on both editors' agendas. The newspapers saw themselves as big improvements over the city's old Confederate press. The Harold, in particular, rarely missed the chance to take a swipe at the old Harold and Argyllian as well as the newspapers still publishing in the South. In a January issue, the publisher bragged that for several days the Harold had been printed using fine new ink imported from the North. It was, he wrote, a big improvement over the "vile compound the rebels used."²⁰

In one scathing editorial, Mason described Southern newspapers as nothing more than a "burling press," which had been in the back pocket of the Confederate government since the beginning of the war. He claimed the Southern press had purposely misrepresented the Union army as

a horde of barbarians who have respected neither
 fathering age nor infancy childhood—who violated
 person and property with a savage wantonness that would
 shame Attila and his savage hordes. . . . To such a
 pitch has this been carried that the child in his
 cradle has been hushed by the long-bear "Yankee
 soldier," and the cheeks crimson and tided, paled have
 trembled at the appearance of our armies.²¹

²⁰ Savannah Daily Herald, 24 January 1865, 1.

²¹ "The Southern Press on the Rebellion," Savannah Daily Herald, 25 January 1865, 2.

In this way, Means wrote, Confederate newspapers had done more than any other group to sustain the flagging morale of the Southern army and people. But he argued that the kind treatment shown Union troops since the capture of the city showed how wrong the press had been about the North. In another editorial, the Herald claimed the Southern press was out of step with public opinion of the war. It maintained that "[t]he people of the South are sick and tired of the war, and realize that the idea of Southern Confederacy is a hopeless one, and they desire peace." The Herald called on newspapers to follow the will of Southerners and urged Confederate leaders to begin serious peace talks.²⁴

The editors of both newspapers had no chance to praise the good feelings which they claimed existed between soldiers and civilians. Even so, the Herald could not ignore the fact that not all Southerners participated in the birthday celebration of President George Washington. Means tried to contrast the "joyful" celebration in 1865 with that of four years earlier when officials of President Lincoln and Vice President Andrew were hanged. "Time has certainly worked changes in this city," he noted in an editorial. But Means also was honest enough to note that only those

²⁴"The Tone of the Rebel Press," Richmond Daily Herald, 1 February 1865, 2.

"patriotically and loyally inclined" participated in the celebration.¹⁹

In two editorials published in March, the Republican contrasted the dreams of 1844 with what the newspaper believed the city would be like the following year. The author of the editorials described a city still suffering as a result of "the betrayal of our glorious country." Stores were closed, cotton warehouses and mills abandoned, harvest decayed, and agriculture neglected. In general a "pall of gloom" had spread over a community that "five years ago boasted of being one of the finest cities of the South and the commercial emporium of Georgia."²⁰ In another editorial the next day, the Republican described the bright future that lay ahead for Savannah. The fears of many Savannahians that the Union army would pillage and ravage the city had not come to pass. In fact, the occupation of the city was the end of anarchy, immorality, and shade. But now, the editorial preached, it was time for residents to put the past behind them. Georgia possessed "all the elements of wealth and commercial grandeur" and Savannah was the "natural outlet for all these valuable commodities."

(We say we will across from our lethargy at once and prepare to enjoy the abundant blessings in store for us as soon as this unjustifiable rebellion is suppressed)

¹⁹"Washington's Birth-day under the Old Flag," Savannah Daily Record, 21 February 1845, 3.

²⁰"Savannah To-Day," Savannah Republican, 24 March 1845, 2.

crusaded. Our path of duty is plain, and it is equally as clear that it is only by refusing to perform our duties as loyal citizens the progress and prosperity of Savannah will be hindered.

It was also clear that Mason, the Herald's editor, was becoming more comfortable in Savannah and taking a great liking to the city. That month the Herald began a series of articles over the pen name "Oliver Stone," praising the beauty of Savannah and recommending it as a wonderful place to live. In several editorials during the winter of 1845 Mason took great delight in reporting the bad weather in the North, while reveling in the mild temperatures Savannah was enjoying. One editorial carried the headline, "How are ye now, ye Chilly ones!"¹¹ Mason also began appearing in the Herald on a regular basis. The following joke appeared under the headline, "Advice to Captains in the Army": "In turning your companies on the banks of a deep and rapid river be careful before you order the men to fall in."¹²

The End of the War

Neither the Savannah newspapers nor the rest of the Georgia press had correspondents in the vicinity of Sherman's army as it left Savannah in February to begin its march through the Carolinas.¹³ As a result, newspapers had

¹¹"Savannah in 1845," SAVANNAH JOURNAL, 25 March 1845, 2.

¹²Savannah Daily Herald, 23 July 1845, 2.

¹³Savannah Daily Herald, 24 February 1845, 2.

¹⁴By 1845, there were very few Georgia correspondents reporting from any of the South's armies. One of the few

to depend on accounts from the Confederate Press Association and the few Southern papers with correspondents attached to the army. Since telegraphic service was unavailable through much of the state, most newspapers had to take their information from their exchanges, and so the news generally was a week or more late in appearing. Confederate General F.O.T. Semmes, later to be replaced by Joseph Johnston, was assigned the task of trying to stop Sherman. But the army of 18,000 weary veterans, comprised of the remnants of Hood's and Gordon's armies, could offer only minimal resistance to the Federal army.²¹

Later in the month, the state's newspapers reported the capture of Columbia, the South Carolina capital.²² The very original reporting on the capture of Columbia appearing in a Georgia newspaper came from Charles D. Kirk, a correspondent with the *Memphis Appeal*. Kirk, who wrote under the pen name "Observer," apparently had made arrangements to report for the *Augusta Constitutionalist*, too. In his account, based

was George W. Adair, former editor of the *Florida Southern Constitutionist*, who was serving as an aide with General Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry. Adair sent occasional letters to the *Columbia Day*.

²¹John G. Barrett, *Sherman's March Through the Carolinas* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 27-418.

²²As was often the case with reports of Union victories, the account of Columbia's capture was preceded with an attack on the Confederacy: "Thus goes on the resistless march of the victory at night over oppression and wrong." *Savannah Daily Herald*, 21 February 1865, 1.

on information from eyewitnesses, he charged that Sherman's troops began to pillage and plunder private dwellings as soon as they entered the city.²⁷ In a later story for the paper, Kirk pointed out what must have been obvious to many Georgians--that Sherman had created a most formidable army. He wrote,

It will not do to delude ourselves with the hope of his [Sherman's] easy overthrow; his army is like a sharp weapon in his hand, easily handled for offense or defense. They have the most unbounded confidence in their leader and regard themselves as certain to go wherever he directs.²⁸

As had been the case in Georgia, Sherman's troops were accused of committing varied atrocities in South Carolina. Although the extent of atrocities has been long debated, there is no doubt that the army intended to punish the state where the rebellion began.²⁹ Sensitivity over the destruction wrought by Sherman's troops often was lost on Savannah's two "Yankee" papers. There is little doubt that the "Song of Sherman's Army," which ran in the Herald, inspired early Savannahians.

A pillar of rice by night,
A pillar of smoke by night--
Some hours of march--then a halt to fight,
And on we hold our way. . .

There is terror whenever we come,
There is terror and wild dismay--
When they see the Old Flag and hear the drum
Advance as on the way. . .

²⁷*Augusta Constitutionalist*, 1 March 1865, 2.

²⁸*Augusta Constitutionalist*, 1 March 1865, 2.

²⁹*Northwestern, Battle Cry of Freedom*, 464.

Around us, in rear and flanks,
 Their battle squadrons play,
 With a dirty mile of steady ranks,
 We hold our shoulder arms.⁴⁰

The lack of reliable information in the Georgia press continued as Sherman's army marched into North Carolina in March heading toward Goldsboro. The capture of Goldsboro on March 23 effectively ended Sherman's victorious campaign through the Carolinas.⁴¹ But the news appeared in only a handful of Georgia newspapers.

News from Virginia was even more sketchy than that coming from Sherman's army. By March, General Lee had become convinced that his outnumbered troops must abandon their trenches around Petersburg to keep from being encircled by the Federal army. Lee attacked Fort Stanton and achieved a smashing breakthrough, but Union troops counterattacked, regaining the lost ground and capturing many prisoners. General Grant ordered another attack on March 28 and when it succeeded, the general followed it up. Ruddy looked, Lee decided he had to withdraw his army, leaving Richmond unprotected. On April 3, President Davis and the rest of the Confederate government fled the

⁴⁰"Song of Sherman's Army," *Savannah Daily Herald*, 31 January 1865, 2.

⁴¹Barrett, *Sherman's March Through the Carolinas*, 217-218.

capital and fled to Danville, Virginia. The next day Richmond was occupied by Union troops.⁴⁰

News of Richmond's fall did not reach Georgia's press for several days and in time when for more than a week, editors put up a brave front, in some cases arguing disingenuously, that the loss of the capital was significant as would appear. The Columbus Daily Sun reported the announcement of Richmond's capture caused "very little excitement" in the city, a rather doubtful statement.⁴¹ And the Milledgeville Confederate Union said,

We do not yield one iota in our confidence in the final establishment of the Confederacy on a basis of independence. . . . Our troops, scattered from one end of the Confederacy to the other, will be brought together, and once united under Lee, Johnston, and Beauregard, they will turn upon the boastful and confident invader, with a force and effect that will drive the dream of subjugation from their maddening brains.⁴²

In Savannah, the Republic editor declared the Confederate cause "dead" after the fall of Richmond and he urged residents to accept defeat gracefully. "There is never any disgrace in surrendering when all hope of success is gone," he wrote.⁴³ Its rival, the Republican, was not so

⁴⁰Shelby Foote, The Civil War, A Narrative, Red River to Appomattox (New York: Random House, 1974), 878-800.

⁴¹"The East," Columbus Daily Sun, 2 April 1865, 2.

⁴²"The Situation," Milledgeville Confederate Union, 11 April 1865, 2. Interestingly, the editorial did NOT appear until after Lee's army had surrendered.

⁴³"g. Ward to the Georgians," Savannah Daily Herald, 2 April 1865, 2.

sensitive. The paper published an extra edition with big multiple dark headlines proclaiming the news. The next day, the newspaper ceased.

The old star-spangled banner now triumphantly floats over the rebel capital, and Richmond, like the prodigal son, is again at the family hearth, though deeply dyed in the blood of insurrection and bitterly scorned into subjection, and acknowledgment of the supreme authority of her protecting sire.⁶¹

What remained of Lee's scattered army, numbering about 13,000 men, rendezvoused at Amelia Court House, thirty-five miles west of Richmond. Lee's goal was to eventually join Johnston's forces in North Carolina. But badly needed railroads were not available at Amelia Court House and Lee was forced to march his army west. Grant pursued and at Sayles's Creek overwhelmed Lee's rear guard and destroyed a large part of his wagon train. Three days later, the Army of Northern Virginia was stopped near Appomattox Station. His line of retreat blocked, Lee sent a note to Grant offering to surrender. On Sunday morning, April 9, the two generals signed formal terms of surrender.⁶²

With rail and telegraph lines still in disarray throughout much of the state, news of Lee's surrender was slow in appearing in many Georgia newspapers. The Augusta Constitutionalist did not report the news until April 21. The Atlanta-Savannah Confederate Union reported the surrender

⁶¹"The News," Richmond Dispatch, 10 April 1865, 2.

⁶²Roots, The Civil War, 927-928.

in its April 25 issue. The Delaware Examiner published the news on April 26 in a small, one-sheet "extra." Even in Savannah, the news did not arrive for almost a week.⁴⁸ Most editors, apparently shocked over news of Lee's surrender, did not have the heart to offer any immediate editorial comment. But a few papers remained defiant. The Albany Patriot refused to attribute defeat to Southern superiority or military prowess, instead placing blame on the apathy of the Southern people. True to its nature, the Patriot concluded its account of Appomattox by declaring, "We are yet unconquered, and until the sword of the enemy is at our throats, we uphold our fellow officers for their sacred and glorious conduct. God bless our country."⁴⁹

Newspapers Struggle to Rehash

The onslaught of events over the next several weeks--the assassination of President Lincoln and the subsequent death of his Vice, John Wilkes Booth, the inauguration of President Andrew Johnson, the surrender of General Johnston in North Carolina, and the capture of Jefferson Davis and Alexander Stephens as they fled into Georgia--was reported by the few Georgia newspapers still publishing.⁵⁰ Continued

⁴⁸Both the Regist and Enquirer published notices on April 18 announcing the surrender, but no copies exist. Portions of the extras were published the next day.

⁴⁹"The News," Albany Patriot, 27 April 1865, 2.

⁵⁰In Savannah, the editors of the Enquirer and the Regist expressed their upset at Lincoln's death. But Hayes refrained from charging Confederates with the crime, and Mason begged the North not to rehabilitate upon the death.

communications difficulties, however, meant that the news appeared late and often was little more than a paragraph or two in length.

During this same period, editors in Columbus and Macon no doubt feared what would happen to their papers--although they did not admit it publicly. In March, Grant had ordered Major General James B. Wilson to take his 13,000 cavalry through the central portion of Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, rich agricultural regions which had been largely untouched by the war. High on the list of targets were Selma, Alabama, and Columbus, Georgia, two of the South's manufacturing centers. Supplied by the Confederates, Union military leaders believed President Davis intended to establish a last-ditch line of defense through this area. Opposed only by a smaller cavalry led by Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest, Wilson's raid was an overwhelming success, and by April 24 his army was poised outside Columbus.⁸¹

Up to this point, the few extant copies of Columbus' papers make it clear that the editors either did not or refused to recognize the threat Wilson posed to the city. The *Log* noted on March 10 that reports of fifteen thousand Federal cavalry in central Alabama were rumors and no more than "mere Northern telegraphic speculation." Besides, as

⁸¹James H. Hargett Jones, *Thomas H. Bland: Wilson's Raid Through Alabama and Georgia* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1974), 1-125.

editor wrote, an Union force was a wish because Forrest, "the wizard of the saddle, is on the war path."¹² When word of Dease's fall reached Columbus, the gag still urged calm. "The city of Columbus is defended today by a much more efficient force than at any previous time, while the prospect of an attack is diminished. . . . Let us keep cool."¹³ Finally, on April 14 the gag recognized that the city faced a direct threat. It urged all "non-Unionists" to leave and asked all able-bodied men to help defend the city.¹⁴

In a daring night attack on the sixteenth, Wilson's troops easily overcame the defenders of Columbus, most of whom were residents of the city and had never been in a battle before. Among the residents killed during the night of fighting was an *Enquirer* editor, J.J. Jones. The next day explosions rocked Columbus as virtually everything of military or commercial value was destroyed. The equipment of the gag and *Times* was wrecked by Federal troops. The presses of their competitor, the *Enquirer*, escaped unharmed, although the paper was forced to cease publishing for a period of time.¹⁵

¹²*Columbus Sun*, 31 March 1865, 2.

¹³*Columbus Sun*, 4 April 1865, 2.

¹⁴*Columbus Sun*, 14 April 1865, 1.

¹⁵Wrestley, *Georgia Journalism*, 19. The reason why the *Enquirer's* office was spared when the gag and *Times* were not has never been made clear, although rumors circulated that there was a Union spy among the *Enquirer's* employees. Louis Turner Griffith and John Ernie Townsend, *Georgia Journalism*.

After leaving Columbus in ashes, Wilson's next goal was Macon. As was the case in Columbus, the Telegraph and Confederate repeatedly assured its readers that Macon was safe from the Union threat. "As certain as the sun shines we can whip the enemy," an editor wrote. Wilson "would not dare attack such a force, as can be demonstrated here in the next three days."⁶⁶ Before Wilson's force could reach Macon, however, word had reached Macon that Sherman had surrounded it at Sherman in North Carolina, effectively ending the fighting in the Deep South. Wilson nevertheless demanded the surrender of Macon and city officials complied.⁶⁷ The last issue of the Telegraph and Confederate under the editorship of S. L. French appeared on April 18. No paper was issued until May 4 when the Macon Evening News appeared, published by several printers in the city. The Telegraph, since the name Confederate, reappeared on May 11 with new publishers listed.⁶⁸ An editorial in that issue appealed to residents to drop their opposition to the federal government and begin to rebuild the state.⁶⁹

Atlanta (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1961), 90.

⁶⁶Macon, Telegraph-Confederate, 148-176.

⁶⁷The new publishers were listed as "Flagland and Smith." No first names were listed and nothing is known about either individual.

⁶⁸Macon Telegraph, 11 May 1865, 2.

elsewhere around the state, other editors were finding that the end of fighting did not mean an end to their problems. Editor Melville Belmont of the *Bonn Opossum* returned to his newspaper's office to find it had been wrecked by Federal soldiers. It took him many weeks before he could tell his readers what he found.

Some three months since we returned to the old office and found it in great confusion. What a jumble it was in to be sure! Stools, tables, boxes, presses, stones and stove pipe, lamping stone, chairs, racks and everything else all turned topsy-turvy; and the chairs splintered up and broken to pieces with sledge hammers and saw-bars until the office looked like the house from the Infernal Region had been building high survival there.

Hoping to find a fresh source of capital, the owners of the *Southern Recorder* offered half of the paper for sale. Its rival in Maconville, the *Cambridgeville Union*, suspended publishing for six weeks during May and June. In Augusta, the *Constitutionalist*, one of the few papers in the state which had not missed a single issue since the beginning of the war, suspended publishing for a week in May. No reason was given for the suspension. The *DeKalb Enquirer* was still publishing but barely. Beginning in April and continuing through July, the newspaper's owner could only manage to get out small, one-sheet news "clips."²²

The Beginning of Reconciliation

During this uncertain period, most of Georgia's press did its best to encourage a peaceful reconciliation with the

²²Griffith and Tolsonow, *Georgia Journalism*, 82.

North. This was only right, as the Aquella Constitutionalist would be a necessarily forthright editorial, because the press "did much to get . . . [the state] into trouble, and should spare no effort to get . . . [the state] out." Most editors, while still defending the Southern cause, declared that the fighting should be over. "We have but one word of advice to give our fellow citizens of the non-confederate states," one editor wrote. "That is, to submit to our fate as become men with that dignity of character that bespeaks a brave, bold, unrepentant, but an overpowered people."⁴⁰ The other Southern Richman provisions,

It is the duty of good citizens to yield obedience to "the powers that be." After the surrender of our union and the dissolution of our government, it is folly to talk now about further resistance. We look upon all attempts to prolong the contest by a system of guerrilla warfare as not only about useless, but a great crime against society.

The editors of Arvanch's two papers were sensitive to the plight of the South. In an editorial, the Herald pleaded with the North not to seek revenge on the South. As a result of the war, editor Bacon wrote, both sides had gained a new respect for one another. He wrote,

Many hard-fought battles, many brilliant raids and skirmishes, and many hard-to-keep fights have taught all of us that the military genius and the valor of the

⁴⁰"The Conflict--The Result--Our Policy, Southern Recorder," Agnes's Constitutional, 1 May 1865, 5.

⁴¹"Leader unto Caesar the Things Which are Caesar's," Agnes's Southern Recorder, 17 May 1865, 2.

American people was confined neither to North, nor to the South, but belonged to the whole people.

The editor of the *Augusta Constitutionalist* said the war had taught the people of both the North and South a valuable lesson, a lesson in humility. Most Americans, he wrote, had believed only a few years earlier that the country was too great to wring into a destructive civil war. But that had all changed, he wrote, adding,

No man now need define for us civil war. We have defined it for ourselves and the lesson that taught us the definition is the lesson of the day. It has been a sharp one and will not, we think, be easily forgotten. It will shock us back into common sense, and teach us what this country, North and South, has long needed to know--that it possesses no exemption from the obligations of national existence; that if wrong be done, evil will follow and that to live and let live, to hear and to forbear, to consider every in judgment, and under God our own, be the whole civil duty of man--be he governor or governed.

In Hillsborough, the editors of the *Confederate Union* took their own step toward reconciliation. When the newspaper resumed publishing on July 11, 1865, the front-page headline was different. Four years after tens of thousands of Georgians had been killed or wounded, a wide swath of the state devastated, and the entire economy ravaged, the *Confederate Union* had reverted to its old name. The newspaper once again called itself the *Hillsborough Federal Union*.

¹²"The End of the Rebellion," *Savannah Daily Herald*, 24 April 1865, 3.

¹³"The Lesson of the Day," *Augusta Constitutionalist*, 28 May 1865, 2.

Conclusion

The newspapers that limped through the final months of the war bore little resemblance to those which had been publishing in Georgia four years earlier. A proud, and often arrogant, press, which had once sixty readers in 1861, had been reduced to less than half that number. Those papers still in business when the war ended published irregularly and in a smaller size. Additionally, most of the news that appeared was old and culled from far-away sources. To their credit, most of the state's editors recognized that it was foolishness for the South to continue fighting, and they urged readers to accept defeat gracefully. Georgia's editors were tired of war and ready to rebuild their lives--and their newspapers.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSIONS

Overview

In The Burden of Southern History C. Vann Woodward suggests that the Southern experience in the Civil War provides a perspective unknown to Americans, that of military defeat, occupation, and reconstruction. While the South has had its share of battles, the illusion that "history is something unpleasant that happens to other people" could not be created among them. The inescapable facts of history, Woodward has pointed out, are that "the South has repeatedly met with frustration and failure." For a country used to overcoming the crises of its history, this is a rather unusual experience.¹ In much the same vein, the experience of Georgia's newspaper editors--and their business in the rest of the Confederacy--during the Civil War has been a unique one in American journalism history. As such it offers some valuable lessons.

This chapter will summarize the news and editorial content of Georgia's newspapers during the Civil War. In particular, it will seek to provide answers to three

¹C. Vann Woodward, The Burden of Southern History (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), 118.

questions: (1) What were the conditions under which Georgia newspapers were published and what effect did the war have on the press? (2) What were the reporting strengths and weaknesses of the state's newspapers? and (3) What role did the state's press play in preserving or hurting public morale during the war?

Conditions of Publishing

The conditions under which Georgia's newspapers were published during the war had an enormous impact on reporting and editorializing. Editors dealt with occasional victories and newspaper shortages as well as financial problems and the general impact of fighting. At no time in American history, before or since, have newspapers faced as many prolonged challenges in simply publishing on a regular basis.

Editors experienced shortages of materials and manpower from the very beginning of the war. The lack of suitable paper on which to print was particularly acute. Beginning in the summer of 1864, many papers began publishing half-sheets; by the following year, it was a common practice throughout the state. Many editors also were forced to reduce the size of the paper they printed on to the point where by the end of the war some papers were published on mere slips of paper. The lack of paper, of course, limited the amount of news editors could print.

Scarcity of ink and type with which to print also was a problem although not as great a one as the shortage of paper. Still, editors regularly complained about the

quality of ink they were forced to use and some appealed to inventive members of the public to devise new sources. Near the end of 1944, James E. Reed, the Savannah *Republican's* editor, wrote to president Jefferson Davis complaining that the supply of type and nearly every other kind of material had been depleted by wartime usage, "until we are now reduced to the necessity of printing a paper which, half the time, nobody can read."¹

Editors also faced the constant problem of finding enough skilled employees to get their papers out. Printers, clerks, reporters, and editors all joined the Confederate army in large numbers, while many of those who stayed home served in the state militia. The shortage of skilled personnel was particularly acute in Georgia.² Editors and publishers regularly appealed for anyone who knew how to operate a press to join their staff. By the end of the war, most editors were using all the resources at their disposal to staff their offices. In September 1944, the staff of one Savannah daily included two disabled war veterans, two

¹ Reed asked Davis for permission to ship ten boxes of letters from Wilmington to Boston in a blockade runner. The editor promised to use the proceeds from the sale of the letters to purchase materials for his newspaper. There is no record of Davis's response to the request. As quoted in J. Cutler Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), 47.

²Of the approximately eight hundred printers in the Confederacy in 1863, seventy-five percent had been or were in the army by June 1864. *Savannah Daily Constitutionalist*, 18 June 1864, 3.

soldiers detailed by the government to work in the office because of their printing skills, and the women.⁴

skyrocketing prices for materials and labor were yet another problem Georgia's editors faced. Paper that had cost three to five dollars a year at the beginning of the war was selling for fifty to sixty dollars in 1864. The cost of type, ink, glue, and other printing materials rose similarly.⁵ Editors did not keep records of labor costs, but it is safe to assume that they felt pressure to increase wages to keep up with the spiraling inflation that plagued the Confederacy. The strike by Atlanta printers in 1864 was evidence of the problem.

Editors bore the higher labor and material costs themselves but also passed them along to their readers and advertisers. The average subscription price of Georgia's dailies at the beginning of the war was five dollars. By the spring of 1865, the price had risen to one hundred and twenty dollars. Prices were raised so rapidly by this point, however, that most newspapers were taking subscriptions for only three months at a time and some were quoting prices only for a month.

owing to these pressures, many Georgia editors sold, merged, or closed their papers. Because the record of papers which published during the war is so incomplete, it

⁴*Atlanta Constitution*, 17 September 1864, 2.

⁵Andrew, *The South Sees the Civil War*, 48.

is impossible to give precise figures in each category. Yet it is clear that during the first three years of fighting there was a steady attrition in the number of papers publishing in the state. The fate of the Upson Pilot was characteristic of many papers, especially rural weeklies. The Pilot's editor, S.A. Miller, joined the Confederate Army after the battle of First Manassas and was sent to Savannah. He supervised the operation of the paper, but struggled in the face of limited circulation and a declining advertising base to get it out on a regular basis. By the end of the year, the paper was making desperate appeals for subscribers to pay their overdue bills, accepting everything from "diamonds . . . [or] spears"⁴ in the place of cash. It was not enough because in January of 1862, less than a year after the war had begun, the Pilot ceased publishing.

Finally, the Union army had a devastating impact on Georgia's press. Until 1864, the state escaped the brunt of the fighting, but General William F. Sherman's campaign against the state changed all that. The Federal army's march through the heart of Georgia scattered newspapers. Some newspapers ceased publishing entirely and did not resume until after the war ended. Others moved their operations to a safe location or suspended publishing until the Union threat had passed. In a few cases, such notably

⁴"Anything for Pap," Upson Pilot, 14 December 1861, 8. "Spears" is a Southern expression for pennies.

Evansville, Union papers replaced the Confederate press after a city had been occupied. By April 1865, less than half of the approximately sixty Georgia daily and weekly newspapers publishing when the war began still were in business.

Reporting the War

Georgia's daily and weekly newspapers had three main sources for news during the war: correspondents, both regular and occasional ones, the Confederate Press Association, and newspaper exchanges. A fourth source, the Confederate government and military, provided a limited amount of news as will be discussed later.

In terms of quantity, newspaper exchanges provided the greatest amount of war news appearing in the state's newspapers. Reprinting news stories clipped from other newspapers was a long-established practice of Georgia editors. This was especially true for country weeklies which had limited access to telegraphic dispatches and were not members of the Confederate Press Association. But daily papers also made great use of exchanged papers, especially later in the war when other sources for news were harder to come by. Editors clipped and used stories from other papers in Georgia, the Confederacy, and even the North. Stories from the state's dailies, particularly those with correspondents in the field, were reprinted most often. Outside Georgia, editors reprinted stories from the North's major dailies, especially the Washing Appeal, Mobile Advertiser & Register, Charleston Mercury, and the three

Richmond papers, the Dispatch, Expositor, and Examiner. The most popular Southern newspaper in Georgia was the New York Herald because of its Southern sympathies, but editors also used stories from other papers including the Baltimore Sun, Philadelphia Inquirer, and Chicago Tribune.

The state's offices also relied on various news agencies such notably the Press Association of the Confederate States of America, known as the P.A. The P.A., which was founded in 1862 after the failure of other attempts at cooperative news gathering, distributed the work of its own correspondents as well as news provided by member papers. The system, although inconsistent in terms of the quality and consistency of news provided, nonetheless was valuable in a war often fought on several fronts. The Georgia offices had the resources to staff all the action taking place.

Correspondents provided an irregular, but important source of news. Only three full-time battlefield correspondents reported for the state's newspapers, Peter W. Alexander of the Savannah Daily, Samuel Chester Reid of the Atlanta Intelligencer, and Henry Williams of the Augusta Constitutionalist. Of these, only Alexander worked for the length of the war. John Butler and an unidentified correspondent who went by the pen-name "Ellis" reported news from Richmond at various times during the war. Far more numerous were soldier correspondents who provided occasional

letters from the various theaters of fighting. Many soldier correspondents sent only a few letters and were never heard from again. However, a few, such as "W.D." of the Free Press, "T.V.O." of the Columbia Enquirer kept up regular correspondence for years. The work of full-time and soldier correspondents was supplemented by citizens who occasionally traveled to the front or the capital to report for their papers.

Georgia's newspapers devoted the most space to the Confederacy's two principal armies: the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of Tennessee. Little or no attention was given to military operations in the trans-Mississippi region such as the Missouri campaign in 1861 or the Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas in 1862. Land battles were reported far more extensively than naval operations. In fact, the only naval battle covered in any depth, besides the capture of Fort Sumter, was the battle of Charleston in 1863. The two Savannah newspapers reported the capture of Fort Pulaski in 1862, but the accounts lacked much depth and detail.

Georgia's newspapers devoted the most space to the war's major battles and campaigns: the battle of First Manassas, the Battle of Shiloh, the Sharpsburg Campaign, the Seven Days Campaign, the battle of Manassas, the Battle of Sharpsburg, the Battle of Fredericksburg, the Vicksburg Campaign, the Battle of Gettysburg, the Battle of Chickasaw, the Battle of Chattanooga, the Wilderness/

Spotylvania Campaign, the Atlanta Campaign, Sherman's march through the Carolinas, and the Siege of Petersburg. Yet other battles went virtually unreported, most notably the battles of Chancellorsville and Vicksburg. Editors utilized all three sources for news in reporting the war and the battles best reported were those in which all three sources were available. Editors recognized when they were being poorly served by their sources and did not hesitate to publicly say so. The editor of the *Christian Era* complained in 1862 that reports from the F.B. agent in Richmond were "unimportant and uninteresting."

Among the battles and campaigns, Vicksburg, Gettysburg, Chancellorsville, and Atlanta stand out as those best reported by newspaper correspondents in terms of their readability, enterprise, scope, and human interest. Vicksburg was reported exclusively by soldier correspondents, while Gettysburg, Chancellorsville, and Atlanta were covered by both full-time and part-time correspondents.

Both full-time and soldier correspondents showed considerable enterprise in producing excellent human interest stories during the long stretches when there was no fighting taking place. Most of the stories centered on camp life, including such topics as food, shelter, recreation, and religion. Correspondents also described military reviews, visits to camp, and the celebration of holidays. Although much of the stories examined the positive side of

The war, the latest reporters also described more grim subjects: military operations, the spread of disease, the mounting casualty figures, and the toll of the war on the South's towns, countryside, and of course its people. Most of these stories, although written in the inflated style of the day, had a gritty realism and possessed many fine qualities including the use of literary devices, anecdotes, and direct quotations.

From the earliest days of Georgia's secession and the Confederacy's life, editors recognized that the activities of the state and national governments were important topics and deserved coverage. In terms of the amount of space given to it, government reporting ranked second behind coverage of the war. Editors or other correspondents with the state's dailies covered the secession convention in 1861 as well as the first session of the Confederate Congress in which the new government was organized. Throughout the war, Georgia newspapers continued reporting on the twice-annual meetings of the state legislature. The major dailies often sent a correspondent, usually an editor, while the smaller weeklies relied on exchanges, especially those from the two papers in Milledgeville, the state's capital.

Most of the coverage from the legislative sessions consisted of dry, factual reporting written in the manner of a recording secretary, a practice started by most newspapers earlier in the century and continued through the war years. Once the war began the state's newspapers devoted far less

attention to the Confederate government. Two newspapers sent correspondents to Richmond at various times during the war. They sent lengthy letters back to their newspapers two or three times a week summarizing and highlighting major activities of the Confederate government. When he was out in the field, Peter W. Alexander of the Savannah Republican also occasionally reported on events in Richmond. Most newspapers in the state, however, depended on the Press Association and their exchanges, especially the Richmond dailies, for news from the capital.

In terms of sheer quantity, local news ranked below news of the war and the activities of the state and Confederate governments. But editors gave evidence that they increasingly recognized the importance of local news, especially as it related to the war. During the first year of the war, all newspapers, from the largest dailies to the smallest weeklies, devoted considerable amounts of space to the organizing and departure of local military companies. Throughout the war, papers followed the progress and fate of their local companies with great interest.

The impact of the war locally also was regularly noted. News of business slumps, shortages, and soaring prices was published. Editors also publicized the work of local industries and residents to aid the war effort. Every community of any size had a Battlefield Ballad Society and papers regularly reported contributions as well as the work of members. Editors continued publishing other items of

local news--accidents, deaths, farm reports, social events--often giving them increased prominence. Some of the state's larger dailies even began a regular column containing brief items about news. Evidence of the growing importance they placed on local news is that editors complained loudly when there was lack of news in their communities. During one particularly slow news period, the editor of the Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel asked, "Is there anybody around who feels like looking up a man and getting his news in the paper? . . . Local news scarce as hen's teeth."⁷

When Georgia became one of the war's major battlegrounds in 1864, editors recorded the impact the influx of refugees, the creation of military hospitals, and, of course, the devastating toll of the fighting. Early in 1864, the News Courier noted that many plantation owners in the area had sold their land and moved to south Georgia. By mid-year, when Sherman had laid siege to Atlanta the Atlanta Evening Post was reporting that so many refugees had arrived in the town that some were forced to live in train houses. Some of the best reporting of the war was done by the papers of Atlanta and Milledgeville in describing the destruction of their communities by Union soldiers. The Southern editors who took over Seaworth's dailies after the city's capture also deserve credit for providing news needed by

⁷Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel, 3 October 1863, 2.

residents who suddenly found themselves in a community controlled by the enemy:

The accuracy, objectivity, and overall quality of the news that appeared in Georgia's newspapers varied greatly and was affected by several factors. An important consideration to be taken into account were the conditions in which the news was reported. Antislavery reporters often worked under the most difficult of circumstances. For a reporter like Peter W. Alexander to simply get to a battlefield often took herculean efforts. "P.W.A." trekked to the scene of battles by foot, horse, and train, sometimes taking all three. He and others rested wherever they could find a safe, dry spot whether on the ground or in a farmer's home and composed their correspondence on the nearest flat surface they could find. Working conditions were even more difficult for soldier correspondents. "A.S.S." closed one correspondence by saying, "Your readers must pardon a short letter. We men can write in a happy vein or style while cannon balls are flying uncomfortably close to his head."²

Reporters in the field, as well as the correspondents in Richmond and Millidgeville, depended on news sources of varying reliability. In a number of cases, not often necessary figures, what they reported was way off base. Yet the best correspondents, such as Alexander, did their best to correct errors that appeared in print. In general, the

²"Letter from JTC," Colonian-Kentucky, 8 September 1863, p. 2

reports of full-time correspondents were more accurate than those of soldier correspondents. This was due in part to the fact that professional correspondents had access to residences in the field whereas soldier correspondents used their own best guesses as the opinions of lower ranking officers. Even soldier correspondents, intent mainly on qualifying their own competence, also purposely slanted their stories.

The accuracy of reports from the Confederate Press Association and newspaper exchanges also varied. Early reports of battles and other major news events usually reached the state's daily papers first by telegraph, and usually from the Press Association reported nearest the scene. These initial telegraph reports usually were followed up with longer dispatches and letters. Often, the later dispatches and letters corrected information in initial reports. Georgia editors clearly recognized the unreliability of some reports. Some stories carried the headline: "Important if true." When news was in short supply, especially in 1864 when the Union army severed communications lines in the state, editors were sometimes forced to print little more than rumor. The Albany Herald printed the dubious report that in fighting near Macon, Confederate forces had killed or wounded 1,400 of the enemy while not losing a single man. Yet the editor felt compelled to advise readers: "This we consider as pretending

has far upon our credulity (sic), and we put it down as one of numerous canards, circulated to keep the drooping spirits of the despondent."¹⁹

Censorship, both the official variety imposed by the military and self-censorship imposed by reporters and editors, also affected the accuracy and completeness of the news appearing in Georgia's newspapers. Censors in the War Department and in telegraphic offices altered or suppressed information deemed injurious to the war effort. In the field, generals such as Albert S. Johnston, P.G.T. Barclay, and Joseph Johnston, possessed their own form of censorship, banning reporters from the army, imposing various restrictions, and generally discouraging candid reporting. Editors and correspondents chafed at many of these restrictions but generally went along with them. At the same time, some editors and correspondents imposed their own form of self-censorship taking care not to reveal information considered sensitive. During the fighting near Chattanooga in 1861, the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer's editor published a note to one of its correspondents: "Georgia--we do not think it would do any good to publish your communications. We deem all such articles tending more to aid and comfort the enemy than to promote the welfare of our army."²⁰ The editors of Alexander and others regularly

¹⁹"The News," Atlanta Fairchild, 4 August 1861, 3.

²⁰Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 17 November 1861, 3.

make reference to information they would have liked to tell readers, but did not because it could be used against the Confederate army.

Some reporters did not shy away from writing stories that uncovered abuses, misconduct, and incompetence in the Confederate army and administration. The Savannah Republican's Alexander clearly stands out among this group. Although his loyalty to the South was beyond question, Alexander repeatedly criticized the Confederate government for its inability to provide proper clothing, supplies, and medical treatment for its troops. And while he repeatedly praised Southern troops and their commanding officers for their courage, he was not afraid to criticize them when they did not measure up to the task. Alexander refused to be an idle observer when problems became apparent. He wrote about them. Indeed, Alexander was not only a chronicler of the Confederacy, but an outspoken conscience as well.

Fremont's Moral Considerations

In printing such stories, editors had to recognize their role as providers of news with that of preserving public morals. Without exception, Georgia's newspapers wholeheartedly supported the Confederate cause and did their utmost to see that South's efforts at independence succeeded. Although the press could be critical of military and political leaders for their prosecution of the war, it never questioned the ultimate aims of the Southern states.

The government and newspapers shared a unity of purpose in wanting to advance the cause of the Confederacy.

As part of their propaganda efforts, Georgia editors rejoiced over Confederate victories and mourned defeats. They glorified the Confederate cause, often using historical analogies, particularly America's war for independence. They revealed in the exploits of the South's military heroes and paid tribute to the heroes at home. They gave abundant space to Union problems, particularly military leadership and internal dissension. They sought to inspire hatred for the enemy with accounts of alleged cruelty and barbarism, and they continually made readers aware of the frightful consequences of Confederate failure.

Editors hailed victories as sure signs of the superiority of Southern fighting men, the rightness of the Confederate cause, and the fact that God was on their side. Such editorials flowed freely during the first two years of the war when Confederate armies often routed the enemy. Losses such as Fort Sumter, Shiloh, and New Orleans were written off as minor setbacks. It took considerable ingenuity by editors, however, to put the best face on the twin disasters at Vicksburg and Gettysburg in 1863. Writing after Gettysburg, the Atlanta Daily Intelligencer's Richmond correspondent "Chas" wrote,

We now learn . . . that success and failure were about equally divided between the two contending armies. . . . The enemy was the first to abandon his position. Without intimating . . . we observed were to secure a better one, and to provide the means for doing

disregard of the large number of prisoners we had taken.¹¹

Obviously trying to put the best face on the two stunning defeats during July of 1861, the editor of the Memphis Daily Telegraph remarked, "In far as the work of southern conquest is concerned, the army is now getting to the difficult part of the undertaking."¹²

Wishful thinking, in some cases bordering on outright dishonestness, was most evident in the stories and editorials during Sherman's campaign against the state. Throughout the spring of 1864 as General Joseph E. Johnston's army was continually retreating toward Atlanta, editors assured readers there was no cause to worry. Editors carefully avoided the word "retreat" in their accounts, choosing instead expressions such as "retrograde movement." Johnston repeatedly would take a stand and fight, they claimed. In the meantime, he was simply "saving his men." Even after it had fled Atlanta and was publishing safely in Macon, the Atlanta Daily Intelligence expressed confidence that Atlanta was safe from the Federal threat. In an editorial, the paper declared,

We are very certain that the Yankee forces will disappear from before Atlanta before the end of August, and that a tremendous movement against him will almost certainly destroy his army. Our confidence in the

¹¹"Special Correspondence," Atlanta Daily Intelligence, 31 July 1861, 1.

¹²Memphis Daily Telegraph and Confederate, 15 July 1861, 2.

process of General Hood and his invincible army is
unbelievable.¹⁷

Likewise, many Georgia papers portrayed Sherman's march to Savannah as a retreat destined to end in defeat. When it became clear that the Union army was unstoppable, the editor of the Columbus Times sought to argue that the cotton and rice plantations of coastal Georgia would be cheap in exchange for the fertile fields and majestic rivers in Tennessee supposedly threatened by General John Bell Hood's Confederate army.¹⁸

In editorial after editorial throughout the war, newspapers held aloft the righteousness of the Southern cause. Some of their harshest attacks were aimed at those who complained of the war's hardships and doubted that the South would ultimately win. These "crockers," as they were usually called, symbolized the worst of Southern society. In the view of editorial writers, and were only one step above the speculators who drove up prices. The consequences of Confederate failure would be rule by Northern despots and an end to the Southern way of life, editors regularly told their readers. The Wilmington Confederate Times urged readers in 1864 to join the fight by declaring, "Fugate cannot kill, gun cannot portray, the hell of horrors which the people of Georgia will have to endure, when Sherman

¹⁷"The Position," Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 3 August 1864, 2.

¹⁸Columbus Times, 21 November 1864, 2.

become their god and master."¹¹ Victory by Sherman's army, the Waco Telegraph and Confederate claimed, would mean the South would be ruled by "a mongrel race composed of the Yankee, the negro and the Donquixote designated, with free love, polygamy and miscegenation ingrafted on the social system, with infidelity to take the place of religion."¹²

Editors also took every opportunity to portray the Northern race in the worst possible terms. Stories, some likely true but many other no doubt false, accused the Northern troops of a host of atrocities from the rape and murder of civilians, to going into battle drunk and inventing diabolical new forms of weaponry. Compared after the loss at First Manassas, the Waco Daily Telegraph claimed that President Lincoln had "deliberately sanctioned a mode of warfare which George II refused to adopt--which even the North American Aborigines never adopted without important qualifications."¹³ When no worthy stories were available, editors simply resorted to name calling. Among the sticks used to describe the enemy were "vandalic," "Barbarians," "evil invaders," and "bloody Joe." President

¹¹"What We May Expect," Willsboroville Confederate Union, 29 September 1862, 2.

¹²Waco Daily Telegraph and Confederate, 3 October 1862, 2.

¹³Waco Daily Telegraph, 10 September 1862, 2.

Lincoln was the "Ape," Benjamin Butler the "Beast," and
 Stephen Grant the "Fetters."

What effect such comments had on morale is difficult to
 determine. Not surprisingly, many officers claimed the
 influence of the press had been great. The editor of the
 Atlanta Daily Intelligencer proclaimed,

When history shall record the mightiest influences
 by which our independence shall have been achieved,
 that of the press will not be overlooked or underrated.

The influence of the press has been ubiquitous and
 all powerful. It has preserved the minds of men and
 helped them to resist obsequiously to the sacrifices
 which the war has imposed. It has penetrated the
 conscience of the nation, called the attention of our
 public men to the measures most necessary for the
 public weal, warned against the adoption of unwholesome
 laws, and moved the hearts of those in authority up to
 the point of action where there [sic] was legislation
 was at stake, and their own feelings to be disregarded.

It has formed a companion for the soldier in the
 camp, and the General in planning his campaign. It
 has sung the hymns of a victory, and buoyed up the
 spirits of the people under a defeat. It has recorded
 the heroic deeds of our brave defenders and subjected
 the numbers of those who fell in battle. . . .

Yet there is also evidence that some reporters and
 editors recognized their influence. In fact, was not as
 great as they claimed, and that newspapers were wrongly
 misleading the public by providing false hope of victory.
 After the fall of Vicksburg in 1863, a correspondent with
 the Augusta Constitutionalist argued the effect of the
 defeat on public morale had been greater because of false

¹⁸Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, 1 October 1863, 2.

statements that glorified violence of victory.²⁰ About the same time, editor J. Henry Smith of the Atlanta Southern Confederacy confided to Vice President Stephens, "I confess that I can hardly find a word of encouragement to say in the paper"²¹ A year later, Henry Fleisch of the Memphis Telegraph and Commercial admitted in a letter to President Davis that many readers had begun to look upon newspapers as "pledged to make the worse appear the better side" and that words of cheer "fall unheeded on their ears."²²

Georgia's newspapers also undoubtedly hurt public morale by their participation in the controversies between Governor Joseph E. Brown and the Davis Administration. Although they were in the minority, some of the state's best-known and most influential papers--the Atlanta Intelligencer, the Georgia Chronicle & Sentinel, the Wilmington Confederate Union, and the Wheeler Southern Watchman--regularly supported Brown in his public feuding with President Davis over such as issues as conscription and suspending the writ of habeas corpus. The editors who sided with the governor argued that they were only looking out for the best interests of the Confederacy and that as a free press they had every right to disagree with the president.

²⁰Atlanta Daily Constitutionalist, 23 August 1863, 3.

²¹Smith to Stephens, 26 August 1863, Alexander H. Stephens Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress).

²²Fleisch to Davis, 7 October 1864, in Jefferson Davis papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress).

press as, their comments no doubt undermined the president's authority in the state.

Some of these same papers also lent their support to the peace movement that began in late 1863 and which gained momentum in Georgia during the spring of 1864. The bitter controversy that ensued among newspapers, with occasional editorials flying back and forth, came at the worst possible time for the state. With a routed and confident Union army poised to plunge into the state, unity, not division, was needed among the state's press.

In its efforts at building unity, Georgia's newspapers received no guidance from the state or Confederate governments, both of which lacked any understanding of the importance of public relations in wartime. The state and Confederate governments occasionally provided the texts of speeches, battle reports from commanders, and other documents most of which were duly printed by the press. Yet there were no systematic attempts at press relations at either level. Davis had little appreciation of newspapers as a medium for the formulation of public opinion. He did not confide in Richmond correspondents and there was little correspondence between him and leading editors. Brown recognized the value of the press, as evidenced by his attempts to secure a newspaper loan in his war. However, his public disagreements with the Davis administration ensured controversy and brought the wrath of many editors

Finally, Georgia's newspapers deserve credit for accompanying peaceful reconciliation with the North after the fighting had ended. Bitterly bitter after four years of wasteful destruction and loss of life, editors nonetheless encouraged readers to put aside their differences with the North and accept defeat gracefully. It is one of the ironies of American history that many Georgians and their fellow southerners did not follow this advice.

Conclusions

In answer to the first question of this study, it is clear that Georgia's newspapers were published under extremely difficult conditions, which grew worse as the war continued and spread into the state. The availability of materials, particularly paper, limited the amount of news and editorial content editors could provide readers. Declining revenues, higher prices for materials, and shortages of suitably trained employees also affected the size and content of the paper published. Editors who no doubt would have liked to have spent more time gathering news or writing editorials instead spent it attending to the myriad problems associated with publishing in wartime. Others gave up their publishing duties to fight for the Confederate army. All of these factors had a tremendous impact on the news and editorial content of the state's papers.

The war affected every Georgia newspaper in some form or another. Many newspapers shut down, failed to receive

publishing. Others were sold or swept, while several in the path of the Union army were wrecked or taken over by enemy troops. Those papers still publishing when the war ended were smaller, costlier, and contained far less news and editorial content:

The strength of reporting by Georgia's newspapers included the system of reporters, both full-time and visiting correspondents. The major land battles, especially Vicksburg, Gettysburg, Chattanooga, and Atlanta, received the best coverage. But correspondents went beyond the day-to-day fighting and produced many fine human interest and enterprise stories on a variety of topics. Also significantly, Georgia's editors showed increasing evidence that they recognized the importance of local news, particularly the impact of the war on their communities.

On the other hand, the news that appeared in the state's newspapers often was inaccurate, incomplete, misleading, and partisan. Government censorship, as well as self-censorship imposed by the press itself, certainly affected the accuracy and completeness of the news published. But the historic roots of Georgia's press also played a role. At the outset of fighting, the state's editors had more in common with their early nineteenth century predecessors than those of the later Penny Press era. There was no clear separation between reporting and editorializing. Few newspapers employed full-time reporters. The little reporting that appeared in papers

before the war usually was done by editors with clearly established political agendas. It is not surprising then that the Civil War reporting was fraught with inaccuracies and partisanship. With no experience in reporting, many correspondents had little concept of what constituted news and an appreciation for the importance of accuracy. They were more interested in extolling the glories of the Confederate cause or the war than presenting interesting and factual accounts.

The historic roots of Georgia's press also came into play in the third question posed by this study: What was the role of the press in preserving and hurting public morale during the war. Georgia's editors clearly viewed one of their tasks to be helping the South win the war. In this respect, their campaign editorials minimizing Confederate defeats, vilifying the North, and declaring the superiority of the Southern cause were successful. Yet in not being entirely honest with their readers, editors likely made the Confederacy's defeat more difficult to accept. Further, the vilification of the North, combined with the conceit concerning the Southern way of life, made reconciliation even harder. The long-standing tradition of political partisanship also led the press to take sides in the constant feuding between Governor Brown and President Davis. Opposition to the president's authority by many papers undermined his authority in the state and no doubt hurt the Confederate war effort.

Yet while the war amplified the shortcomings of Georgia's journalism, it also had a positive impact on the press and created more interest in newspapers than any time in the state's history. The best reporters and editors recognized that readers wanted more than mere partisanship and propaganda. And in numerous instances the work produced was first-rate. Both battlefield reports and enterprise stories contained many characteristics of modern reporting, from their attention to detail, to their attempts at exposing wrongdoing. In reporting the news of roadside fighting in faraway places and the impact of the war on their communities, editors also showed a growing recognition of the importance of local and human interest news to readers. Never again would they take a back seat to news from elsewhere. Very likely, it was this recognition of the vital role the press played in local communities that kept many Georgia newspapers publishing far longer than they should have been expected to. Editors overcame a host of obstacles to put out the best papers they could, for as long as they could. In a war with so many casualties, that was no small accomplishment.

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